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FOR ONE MOMENT JOYCE'S ARMS WERE ABOUT DOUGLAS' NECK, HER LIPS GAVE THEIR SOLEMN, FAREWELL KISS, AND HE WAS GONE.

THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"You see," said Mrs. Sims, meditatively, "the house is a great deal larger than we need, and many very elegant people take boarders now; why should not we! This Miss Greenway would be pleasant company for me, too, when you are from home, Will."

"You are not often without company," answered Mr. Sims, with a grim smile; "but please yourself, Emma; the matter rests entirely with you."

"Very well, I shall write Miss Greenway that we accept her terms. I hope she won't turn out a horrid old frump; most schoolmistresses are."

She gave a satisfied glance at an opposite mirror, and was evidently so delighted with what she saw, that she looked again. Yet the reflection was not beautiful. Mrs. Sims was extremely angular, with a long face, nondescript complexion,

pale eyes, and scanty hair of no particular shade. She confessed to twenty-eight, but those who knew her best, darkly hinted that she was at least seven years older. She was bad in manner and conversation, esteeming vulgarity wit, and fastness high spirits; she never would have been tolerated at Carnstone, but for the fact that she possessed an exquisite voice, beautifully and carefully trained; although, indeed, when she spoke, none would have suspected this.

Mr. Sims was the organist and choir-master of the principal church in the town; and they had no children; he was of an economical turn of mind, so that when the vicar asked him if he could accept the new school mistress as a lodger he was secretly glad, although he professed to scout the idea.

Duly Miss Greenway arrived, and she was certainly neither "frump nor old." She might have been twenty; she could not have been more. She was of medium height, rather pale, and extremely pretty, with dark brown hair and large, soft, dark eyes; and she dressed with evident taste.

But for the excellent opinion of her own charms, Mrs. Sims would have been jealous of her

lodger's prettiness; as it was, her conceit was too profound easily to be ruffled, and she greeted Miss Greenway effusively.

"We are bound to be good friends," she said, in her loudest accents. "I'm glad you are young, I hate old stagers; now let me show you your diggings; I think you'll say they're A. 1."

Miss Greenway was very glad that her landlady preceded her, because she found it quite impossible to keep a look of surprise from her face as she listened to this slangy address. Inwardly she felt that there never could be even a semblance of friendship between herself and Mrs. Sims.

Two rooms had been placed at her service; they were large and airy with a pleasant outlook, and very fairly furnished. The girl expressed herself satisfied; while Mrs. Sims hastened to say—

"I placed you at the back of the house, because it is quieter and you get a good view of the lawn—we usually tea outside in the summer months. It is awfully jolly; but it runs away with a lot of cash to keep in good order."

She was fairly mounted on her pet-hobby the lawn—about the size of a large handkerchief—it was her pride and boast. Until her marriage she had



been accustomed to only a very small house, in a very obscure street, and her sudden elevation to comparative grandeur had quite disturbed the balance of the little mind she possessed.

Joyce Greenway was compelled to listen to a minute account of the terrible expenditure which resulted in the display of half-a-dozen rose-bushes surrounding the lawn, and the few meagre geraniums just coming into bloom, until the stream of Mrs. Sims' eloquence ran dry and they went down to tea.

Afterwards, the former sang ballad after ballad, until Joyce said—

"You should never do anything but sing," mentally adding, "because only then are you not vulgar."

The other drank in the compliment greedily and being pleased by it answered—

"I'm glad you like music. I'm quite gone on it, you know. By the way, you may care to join our choir. We want a few more treble and alto voices. Let me try yours."

So Joyce sang "In the Gloaming" and "Love's Old Sweet Song," in a sweet, although not very powerful contralto, and Mrs. Sims professed herself delighted.

"We will go to practice together this evening," she cried, taking the other's consent as a matter of course. "I don't often turn up at such affairs, they're a sight too slow for me, but they may amuse you, and Will is sure to be pleased. Half the girls are old girls, and awful dowdies, and then, the greater part of the men are married—but our leading tenor makes up for the lot—he's a regular darling. Quite a gentleman, with plenty of money, and so handsome; I'll introduce you—his name is Douglas Boursnell, and all the girls are dying for him."

"How unpleasant for the girls," remarked Joyce drily; "and if Mr. Boursnell has either heart or conscience, how cruelly he must suffer."

"Oh, it makes no difference to him; he don't care a fig about any of them. Now, if you're rested, we will dress and start. I say, that hat you were wearing to-day has taken my fancy; I shall have one like it."

"Imitation is the sincerest flattery," quoted Joyce, as she inwardly resolved to alter the arrangement of the laces and feathers.

All the way to church Mrs. Sims was descending upon the perfections of Mr. Boursnell until Joyce was weary of his name, and pictured him as a man of the type of a barber's wax figure, so was quite prepared to dislike him.

As they entered, a group of men and girls who had been talking together veered round, one of the latter exclaiming,—

"Mrs. Sims, is it really you in the flesh? This is condescending."

Ignoring the speaker's sarcastic tone she answered,—

"Oh, I don't need to rehearse the simple business we do here; but I've brought a recruit. Mr. Boursnell, allow me to introduce you to my friend Miss Greenway."

A very tall, muscular looking man, advanced leisurely; as his fine dark eyes rested upon Mrs. Sims' friend they wore a somewhat surprised expression, and Joyce felt with an uncomfortable shock he was more anxious to avoid than to know her; so that her reply to his conventional remarks were very frigid.

She was much annoyed too, when at the close of the rehearsal Mr. Sims pounced upon him with the words,—

"Oh, I have got that new song of Tosti's for you; come up and try it over."

"Not to-night, thanks; let it wait until to-morrow."

"No time like the present," broke in Mrs. Sims, "and it won't be the first time you've shared pot-luck with us. Besides all that, I want you to bring Miss Greenway along," and taking her husband by the arm she bounced away leaving Joyce confused and angry.

With a red spot on either cheek she turned to her companion.

"Pray, Mr. Boursnell, do not consider me in the least; I can find my way home, and I would very much rather go alone."

Something in her tone piqued him, and he answered coldly,—

"I cannot allow that; Mrs. Sims gave you into my charge, she is already too far away for you to overtake her; so that much as you dislike my society I am afraid you must endure it for a little while."

"I am quite capable of taking care of myself, and I will not trespass upon your courtesy," Joyce broke out, when her companion remarked quietly,—

"This is foolish, Miss Greenway; your friends placed you in my care."

"The Sims are not my friends; I am merely a boarder. I only arrived to-day, and had I guessed to what indignities I should have been subjected I never would have put myself in Mrs. Sims' hands."

She was so genuinely hurt and angry that Douglas Boursnell's face lost a great deal of its pride and annoyance, as he said in a more kindly tone than he had yet used,—

"I beg your pardon; I ought to have remembered that our mutual acquaintance has a way of claiming friendship with each and all on the shortest notice. Now let me take you home, and I will promise not to transgress in like manner again unless you give me permission—and Sims expects me."

"Very well," answered Joyce more temperately, "if you should chance to forget our agreement (which is unlikely) I shall remind you of it;" and in almost utter silence they returned to Linden House.

The girl went at once to her room, despite all remonstrances and entreaties.

"He has been so spoiled," she thought, "by the open admiration of girls that he thinks all must fall before him. He did not wish to bring me home, and it was detestable of Mrs. Sims to thrust the task upon him—but he shall know that I have no designs upon his young affections—" this with a little savage laugh, "and oh! how I shall hate that woman if I must suffer her society."

By which sentiments it may be safely inferred, pretty Joyce had both "a temper" and opinions of her own.

From below came the sound of singing; a woman's voice pure and sweet, lending music to words whose passion and pathos she could not understand; but they brought tears to the listener's eyes.

She was very lonely, this poor little School Board governess; two years ago she had lost her sole remaining relative—the aunt whose bounty had never failed her, and now, at times, the young heart grew heavy with the thought,—

"If I died to-night, no one would weep for me."

She had not been without lovers, but love had never touched her heart, all the glory, all the sweet sadness of this divinest passion yet remained unknown to her, and almost she scoffed at its votaries.

Now Douglas was singing; she noiselessly opened her door to listen—he had chosen "Ruby" and as the sweet words and pathetic notes reached her she covered her face, as she whispered,—

"Oh to be loved with such a love! How easy it would be to die having tasted such sweetness;" and so forgot to laugh at the little blind god.

Very frequently in the weeks which followed she met Douglas, but her manner never lost its frigidity, and Mrs. Sims confidentially assured him that,—

"Joyce was an odd little toad, without a bit of fun in her."

Still, in spite of her coldness, and Mrs. Sims' disparaging remarks he felt somewhat interested in the girl—probably at first because she treated him so cavalierly, and this was indeed a novel experience to the favourite of fortune.

It was strange how frequently as she walked to or from school she saw that stalwart figure approaching; maddening to feel the hot blood mount her usually pale cheeks, as the dark grey eyes (so dark as to be mistaken for black in certain lights) met hers seriously, and the mellow voice gave her casual greeting.

For as yet Douglas had faithfully remembered his promise, and never attempted to stay her hurrying steps.

## CHAPTER II.

THE rain came down in torrents; Joyce stood watching the puddles in the road, and wishing that she had not neglected to bring her umbrella to school that morning. The caretaker was waiting to lock up the room, and casting impatient glances at the slender, neatly-gowned figure; she had brewed her tea and was anxious to get back to it. With a little sigh the girl drew her skirts close about her.

"Apparently it is useless to wait longer," she said, "and I am keeping you Mrs. Carter!" she half hoped the woman would ask her to take tea with her; but the latter was not hospitable, and so Joyce stepped into the open with a brief "good afternoon," heard the door close upon her, then a voice which said,—

"Miss Greenway, I must ask you to let me break my promise, at least on this occasion. You cannot walk home uncovered in such a rain."

She flushed, not wholly with annoyance, then said with some asperity. "You are very kind, Mr. Boursnell; but I do not mind the weather, and could not think of troubling you."

"It is no trouble," curtly, "and I am waiting. How very perverse you are."

He was glancing frowningly down upon her, and his eyes had a vexed look, which somehow delighted her.

"I could not inflict such penance upon you," she said, demurely, "and it is only five minutes' walk to the tram line."

"Whilst you are discussing the point you are getting wet. If you like to go home by tram do so; but I will take you so far on your journey—courtesy isn't yet quite extinct. Come," and without further remonstrance she walked beside him; but the tram had left, there was nothing to do but hire a cab, or brave the rain, and Joyce decided on the latter course.

"Pray come no further," she said, "it is folly for two to get wet, when only one need, and I must bear the consequences of my own want of forethought."

He made no answer as he strode on by her side for some distance, but she felt he was regarding her quizzically, and looking up, said with a flash of spirit.

"It is not courteous so absolutely to ignore my wishes."

"I don't believe you wish really to spoil your pretty hat," he answered coolly; "pray be reasonable, Miss Greenway, and although you hate me, tolerate my society a little while for your own sake."

"I did not say I hated you," quickly, "although I confess I consider you very officious—and—disagreeable."

"I am sorry that is your opinion. May I ask if none of your friends have ever gently hinted you are a wee bit self-willed, and require taming?"

"I have no real friends; perhaps that is why I am a stranger to myself."

"But your people?" he questioned, looking at her with increased interest.

"I have none," and her voice shook a little with the thought of her own desolation, "no home or parents; neither kith nor kin."

"Poor child!" The voice was so changed from its ordinary, cold civility that it held Joyce quiet, and she trembled somewhat as it went on: "Nothing can be sadder than an utterly friendless condition; and it is infinitely worse for a young, delicate girl than for a man. Miss Greenway, I do not think we ought to quarrel so persistently, for, so far as my knowledge serves, I too, am alone in the world. That ought to be a reason for friendship. Shall we try to arrive at a better understanding of each other?"

She was almost crying, for kindness touched her deeply, but still she contrived to say with a nervous laugh.

"You ought to know first what horrid thoughts I have had of you."

"I can probably guess them, but I am not implacable, and it is just possible that I may forgive you—if not immediately, yet at a date not far distant, and I promise not to be a troublesome or obtrusive friend. Miss Greenway, there is a tram behind; will you get in?" this with a comical glance at her.

A provoking little smile just curved her lips,—  
"Thank you, yes; and so relieve you of your self-imposed duty."

"Of course you must please yourself; but I have looked over my shoulder and ascertained that Mrs. Sims is a passenger."

"That decides me; I will even endure your criticisms to escape her."

"Come then; I will take you by a pleasanter route than you know," and wholly disregarding Mrs. Sims' signals, he hurried Joyce down a narrow lane, shadowed by trees, the boughs of which were so thick as almost effectually to keep out the rain.

They arrived at Linden House almost as quickly as Mrs. Sims, who was shaking out her skirts in the hall; as they entered, she shrieked,—

"Oh, I say, what confounded weather! And how delightfully blind you were when I beckoned you. Really I am afraid it's a very far gone case," but Joyce had flown, and was standing flushed and palpitating in her own room. Douglas, on the contrary asked, quietly,—

"What is a far gone case, Mrs. Sims?"

"Oh, don't try to throw dust in my eyes. I am as sharp as most people, and, of course, I know that it is a settled thing between you."

"Mrs. Sims, I regret you should so misconstrue a simple act of courtesy. May I ask you not to connect our names in future; it would be as disagreeable to me as to Miss Greenway."

"Oh rot!" laughed the lady, "come in and have tea."

"On the *larva*!" he questioned, drily, "not to-day thank you," and he left before Joyce came down.

She was then so quiet, so reticent, that even her companion did not venture to question or tease her, for despite her youth and gay ways, she had a gentle dignity which became her vastly, and annoyed Mrs. Sims, whilst it kept her silent.

After that Douglas and Joyce did not often meet, but those infrequent meetings began to be very dear to the girl, although as yet she would not acknowledge so much to herself; and certainly Douglas Boursnell did not strive by any means to win her heart.

He was very, very kind to her, in a grave, unpretentious way; he lent her books and music, but he did not even present her with a single flower. He never uttered a word that all the world might not hear.

"My dear," said Mrs. Sims, to one of her numerous friends, "that sly little cat (she was never remarkable for delicacy of speech) thinks she is going to catch him; but, bless you, Douglas Boursnell is only amusing himself. It isn't likely he'd marry a penniless girl when he might have Miss Thorpe and her thousands just by saying the word."

"Miss Greenway seems a very nice girl," remonstrated the other.

"Oh, very! I can tell you I'm sorry I ever had compassion on her and took her in. She is a conceited little monkey, and I don't believe for a moment but what she has relatives, only they're too shady for her to own."

Then later this amiable lady went to Joyce.

"Darling old girl, you won't get riled and think I'm taking a liberty, but I really *must* talk to you about that handsome, naughty fellow, Douglas Boursnell. It won't do," shaking her finger playfully—"it won't do, Joyce! You'll only get your wings scorched if you play with that fire. He's nice to walk and to flirt with, but he isn't a marrying man, my love," she ended, with a shrill laugh.

"I fail to understand you, Mrs. Sims," said Joyce, proudly.

"Oh, you sly little puss! Well, to put it plainly, I wouldn't waste time or thought upon Boursnell; it's so much labour lost. Why, you remember that day when he brought you home; I confess I chaffed him, and he said, 'Oh, yes, of course Miss Greenway is good fun, but I ask you not to connect our names in future; it would be intensely disagreeable to me.'"

Joyce rose suddenly; she was very white and calm.

"Is this true?"

"Why, of course it is; I did not like to tell you, but Will said I ought."

"Thank you," in those same quiet, puzzling tones. "I am very much obliged to you. Pray inform Mr. Boursnell that I have even a greater objection than he to the coupling of our names," and she walked out into the snug garden whilst Mrs. Sims watched her with malicious eyes.

"They ridicule me," she said, savagely, "and they shall suffer; she shall not queen it over me. Mrs. Boursnell, with seven thousand a year, would scarcely give me a glance of recognition. So my lady you must come down from your pedestal, and I owe him many a grudge."

The next night was church rehearsal, but Joyce was not present, neither did she attend service on the Sunday, and it came upon Douglas with a shock that he missed her presence far more than was good for his peace of mind.

Almost a fortnight passed before he had an opportunity of speech. He met her frequently and was convinced that her avoidance of him was intentional.

At first he was angry and thought,—

"Very well, I will not force myself upon her. From the beginning she has tried to show me my friendship was distasteful."

And then, manlike, he began to crave for what he could not have; to long for the sound of her voice and touch of her hand, until, with a pang, he realized he loved her.

His earliest thought was to go away, never by his own will to see her any more; his second was that there was more in her changed manner than he guessed, and he resolved at least to see her and clear his name from any aspersion cast upon it.

He waited for her one morning outside the school. She did not see him until he was quite near, and escape was impossible. He noticed that her sweet face grew paler, and her eyes wore a frightened expression as he advanced.

"Miss Greenway, I want to know why you treat me so cavalierly."

Her lips quivered, but she answered,—

"Surely you will not deny me the right to choose my own circle of friends."

"A little while ago I made one of that circle. For what offence am I cast out?"

"Do not you know?" flashed Joyce, who was candour itself. "You offered me the caricature of friendship. You spoke slightly of me."

"I'll swear all this is false. Give me the name of your informant."

"No, I cannot do that in honour. My information was given confidentially."

"Precisely so, Miss Greenway; but it is a cowardly foe who strikes in the dark. Let me have the list of my offences now."

She was trembling very much as she answered,—

"You were ashamed openly to call me friend. It was intensely disagreeable to you that our names should be spoken in the same breath."

"Stop! I know now who has done me this ill turn. It is Mrs. Sims! Perhaps you will kindly hear my version of the matter," and he briefly repeated all that had passed, ending with the words, "There is no one's friendship I value as I do yours, Miss Greenway, and I am unfeignedly hurt you should have been so ready to condemn me."

"If I said I was sorry," she almost whispered back, "would you forgive me and take me back for your friend again?"

### CHAPTER III.

As he looked into her beautiful eyes, he saw there all that he longed to call his own, all that for her sake he had hoped not to see. She loved him and he dared not stretch out his hand to take the goodly gift. Alas! alas! there was nothing in store for them but sorrow and pain.

"Joyce," he cried, "it is I who should ask forgiveness, but I never thought of evil to myself or you; there is nothing I would not do to spare you pain." He paused a moment, then added,

"We cannot talk here, and I have much to say to you. I cannot leave you confirmed in the

belief of my utter unworthiness. Let us go down by the river, we shall find silence and solitude there."

Wondering and full of vague fears she walked beside him, not able to speak or even to think coherently. Her mind was in a whirl; her heart was throbbing wildly with that newly awakened and all absorbing passion. A little boat was lying close to shore in charge of a lad, who willingly agreed to "hire it out," and into this Douglas helped his pale companion. He rowed vigorously until they had left the last cottage behind them, and Camstowe proper lay far in the rear. Then resting on his oars he said—

"Joyce, I did not mean to tell you what I am sure you must now have guessed. I have no right to speak of love to you or any woman, but I cannot let you remain in ignorance of my regard or in doubt as to the future. Oh my dear! oh my dear! if I have unconsciously won your heart may you and Heaven forgive me, and may the very hopelessness of it all teach you forgetfulness of me."

He paused; great drops of sweat standing upon his brow, for his anguish of soul was the more cruel because for her sake it must be suppressed with an iron hand. Joyce met the glance of his dark eyes bravely. She was trembling violently, she not doubt him; her faith like her love was strong as death, and through all her shaken tones there breathed perfect trust.

"I cannot even guess what your secret is. If you would rather keep it inviolate I do not wish to hear. Whatever sorrow your past holds I feel it has no shame, and—I am proud—I shall be proud always—that I gave my heart to one so true. If we must part not one word of mine shall increase the bitterness of your pain, and oh! you must not reproach yourself with the thought of what I may suffer."

He took her hand in his, saying hoarsely—

"Don't! Every word you utter only increases my remorse. As for my secret that must be shared with you in justice to both. No one at Camstowe is aware that I have ever been a married man, but the fact remains the same."

She was startled, and, if possible her white face grew whiter. If Douglas had lost his wife by death, then there could be no further obstacle to their happiness. She looked piteously at him.

"Your wife—did she die—or—did you separate?"

"I don't know to this day the fate of poor little Mary, whether she lives or not. It is all a mystery which five year's unceasing enquiries have failed to solve. Simply the story is this. Mary was a little ill-used governess at a house in town where I used to visit. Like yourself she was an orphan and friendless. I was sorry for her. One day something occurred which roused my deepest compassion, and I then offered to make her my wife if she could be content with affection and esteem. She loved me and consented, so in a few days we were quietly married and I took her abroad. Anything like her gratitude and her wonder I never saw. She was a delightful companion, being so easily pleased and so eager to please. We did the Rhine, and then we visited France. We were on our way to Chateauroux when the tragedy of my life occurred. Three miles from our destination a fearful collision took place, and I knew no more until three weeks later when I found myself in a strange place with a Sister of Mercy by my side. I asked for Mary, but no one could tell me anything of her. She had not been seen since the catastrophe. No one answering to her description had been found amongst the dead. Since that day, despite all search, all enquiries, I have failed to elicit any news of her. Sometimes I think that she must have been one of the victims, but until thought becomes undisputed fact I dare ask no woman to share my lot. I wish for your sake we had never met, but I did not dream of such a *dénouement* to our friendship. All my life I had been proof against love, and now love has his revenge. Joyce, Joyce! What are we to do? Show me my duty—the way has grown all too rough for me."

"Just now it seems so, but you are strong and will conquer self. You know that your duty is to her. Poor wife, who perhaps seeks you vainly

even as you seek her. Oh, Douglas, how hard it is to say we must not meet again. Either you or I must leave Camstowe."

He drew his breath hard and was silent a moment. Then he said—

"You have arrived at the decision I felt you would, and for me there is nothing left but submission. But if she is dead, are we to waste all our lives, squander all our happiness because of our uncertainty?"

"The answer is yes. No man degrades the woman he loves honestly, and you would hold me less dear if I could step into the place which another may even now claim by prior right. Oh Douglas! Douglas! in all our woe at least we have one consoling thought—neither has cause for shame."

And then her weary head drooped low, her face was hidden on her clasped hands, whilst he saw rather than heard that she was weeping.

"You are right, Joyce; I must go; your livelihood lies here—unless, indeed, out of my plenty you will accept an annuity for yourself—remember I owe you recompense."

She spoke quickly, then in stifled tones.

"No, no! let me work, for work is rest to an aching heart, and—and it would seem like accepting damages as one does in a breach of promise case."

She tried to laugh, but it was a pitiful failure; leaning forward he kissed her upon the lips, saying—

"It must be as you will, but if you can alter your decision, I shall be unfeignedly glad and grateful to you."

But she shook her head. Presently, when she had grown more composed, she asked—

"When do you go? And what shall you do when you have left Camstowe?"

"I shall leave in two days; it will not take long to settle my affairs; and I intend once more to personally conduct the search for my wife. If I learn that she really perished, I may return to you."

"Yes; though years upon years have gone by, you will find me faithful to you."

"And I may see you once more before I go. You will not deny me that?"

"I must, for my own sake and for hers. You must not even write, for in nothing will I sin against her, or forget the respect due to myself. Oh, Douglas! let it be good-bye now—I cannot go back to Camstowe with you, to be confronted by curious looks and impertinent questions—let me go a-bore."

And seeing that she was tortured beyond her strength he uttered no remonstrance. There on the green bank, knee-deep in meadow-sweet and ripe rushes they said good-bye—one moment her arms were about his neck, her lips gave their solemn, farewell kiss, her tears were wet upon his cheeks, and—then he was gone—through a blinding mist she watched until she could see the light boat no longer, then she cast herself down, and with hidden face wept as though her heart would break.

It was Wednesday, and there was no afternoon school, fortunately for Joyce, so she stayed in the lonely meadow until the sun began to go down, and the traces of tears were obliterated. Then slowly and heavily she went homewards, wondering in her aching heart how she would bear the burden laid upon her. Mrs. Sims met her in the hall, exclaiming—

"Great Scott! Where have you been? How white you look! Ain't you well?"

"I am tired; I walked a little too far."

"Well, you'll have tea, won't you? Will has only just come into his; you can have it together. Are you going to choir practise? Boursnell has promised to be there (with a covert glance at Joyce), and as the vicar himself has begged me to go, I suppose I must. What, not going? Have you quarrelled with Douglas—?"

"Why should I? Don't you know that we are only acquaintances?"

"Humph! I wouldn't make too sure of that—"

"You may; and I shall not leave the house again this evening. I want rest."

The trials of the day were not yet over for

Joyce. A little before tea Mrs. Sims burst into her room with the words—

"Oh, I say, I'm completely bowled over; Douglas Boursnell is leaving Camstowe, probably for good. You don't think (with a merry giggle) that he is afraid his attentions to you can be construed as serious, and scents an action—?"

"Mrs. Sims, how dare you so insult me! I have endured much annoyance from you without protest; but to-night you excel yourself in insolence. Please remember I shall not require your rooms after this month."

Her eyes were flashing and her cheeks blazed with outraged pride and modesty. Mrs. Sims looked at her a moment in cowed silence, then, recovering her native audacity, she said—

"Well, I'm sure I'm glad to be rid of such an unpleasant boarder. I never should have accepted you, but that the vicar made a point of it, and I was willing to give you a fair start in good society."

"I thank you for your kind intentions, but I must remind you I have never availed myself of them; and that I never indulge in vulgar recriminations," with which words she retired to her bedroom.

The next day Douglas called to "say good-bye," but Joyce was absent. For this Mrs. Sims began to apologise, when he stayed her with the words—

"My visit is to you; I have chanced to meet Miss Greenway casually, so that it is not necessary I should wait for her return."

"I always thought you rather admired her—in fact that you were—"

"You should never allow your imagination to run riot; and I fancied you were well aware that Miss Greenway, always persistently snubbed me."

"Yes, I must confess that she has not a very good temper; I am perfectly afraid of her when she is in her horrid moods. I suppose you know that she is leaving us shortly?"

"I was not aware of it, Miss Greenway did not make me her confidant."

And nothing could the lady extract from him. But she contrived to make the remainder of her lodger's stay extremely unpleasant, and went about whispering that Douglas Boursnell "was too great a gentleman openly to declare he had left the town, because of Miss Greenway's distasteful attentions, but he had hinted so much to her, and after that, of course, she requested her to leave at her earliest convenience."

A certain section of her acquaintances, of course, were ready to listen and to repeat her statements; but Joyce did not suffer so much as she would probably have done, as the vicar was her warm friend, and his women-folk made much of her, to Mrs. Sims' disgust and chagrin. The vicar's herself secured other apartments, and a more congenial landlady for her favourite.

#### CHAPTER IV.

ALMOST a year had passed; once again it was July, and Joyce was taking her hard-earned holiday at a little seaside village called Shiftingsands.

In all the long, long months she had heard nothing of or from Douglas, and she knew that his silence meant despair, that his search was fruitless.

She tried to be patient, she was marvellously so; she tried to forget, but Joyce Greenway was not good at forgetting; and still one image filled her heart, one dear and sweet memory haunted alike her waking and sleeping moments.

She was quite alone, and the solitude was grateful to her. She liked best to visit the beach at early morning, or at dusk, before the fishers were astir, or when the children had gone to rest; the grand stretch of sea, the blue and smiling sky, seemed to bring peace to her troubled heart, rest to her disturbed mind.

She spent a whole week without meeting any notable adventure, or encountering any person in the least remarkable; then came a change.

Loitering upon the beach, just below an overhanging rock, she heard voices; then the sound of steps coming down a tortuous path hitherto unnoticed by her.

As she glanced lazily upwards she became aware that almost hidden by a dense growth of foliage was a little white cottage on the rocky summit, and that from the garden had issued a tall, old man with a venerable beard, and what appeared to be quite a young girl.

As they came nearer, she saw with a shock of pity, that the latter was a woman of some twenty seven years, and really looking older despite her small, slender figure, and the wealth of falling, flaxen hair.

The face though woebegone and wan, was rather pretty still, the eyes large, well-shaped, dark blue, but alas! alas! in them was no light of reason, only a pitiful vacant stare, cruel to behold.

Her companion was quietly guiding her steps, and speaking in kindly tones, was unmistakably French; she herself did not look like a foreigner.

Despite his care, as they neared the foot of the path, she slipped and fell; she was really not hurt, but she gave a shrill little scream, which brought Joyce at once to her side.

"Can I help you?" she asked gently, "lean on me; let me raise you."

But the other petulantly thrust her aside, exclaiming, "Go away! go away!" and began to cry like a child.

The gentleman laid his hands upon her shoulders, and in a peculiarly low tone said,—

"Reine, you forget! This lady is most kind; thank her prettily, or you will make me angry."

A moment the unhappy creature peered through her falling hair at Joyce, then she began to smile, as those kind, pitiful eyes met hers, and put out her hand with a trustful gesture infinitely pathetic. Joyce held the slender fingers in her own, looking down upon them through a mist of pain.

"Poor little hand," she said soothingly; "see the stones have bruised it, but there is not much harm done, with care it will soon be well—let me bind it up;" and this she did so deftly that the old gentleman watched her with something like admiration.

"You are a nurse," he said when Joyce had finished her task.

"Oh no! only a Board School Governess; I never had the good fortune to follow my wishes, perhaps (with a faint smile) because I have not sufficient ability and stamina."

He was still regarding her curiously, whilst the poor creature by her side, gaining courage, was fondling her hands.

"I have not seen you at Shiftingsands before," he said at length, "You are not a native?"

"No, only an idler; one who has earned her spell of rest and enjoys it accordingly. I am here quite alone."

"I ought to introduce myself," he interrupted, with a profound bow. "I am Doctor Francois Largentiere; will you not make me proud by returning with me to the cottage; my sister will be glad to know you because you are young and bright; sometimes she is *triste*, and sometimes she longs for other faces than mine and Reine's, for she has other interests and she does not believe in my theory."

Wondering a little what the doctor's theory might be, Joyce expressed her willingness to accompany him, and together they assisted Reine up the roughly hewn steps, she clinging to her new friend with childish delight. A lady, somewhat younger than the doctor met them in the little porch, and greeted Joyce with old world cordiality; when they had become better acquainted she took the sweet young face between her hands and kissing it in French fashion said,

"My dear, you ought to be happy; you have true eyes but they are sad. It is always the loyal and loving who suffer."

She glanced at Reine as she spoke.

"See the wreck trouble has made of her; my brother has hopes of her restoration, but I—I have none. It was thus the other Reine suffered and died, that nearly broke my heart. Francois says this Reine was not always thus."

Then she broke off leaving Joyce to wonder painfully if they had all gone mad together. Presently she invited her guest to stay to uncheon.

"It will be a charity to me, *mon amie*; it is often I am *triste*, and I like you."

So Joyce stayed, and that was the beginning of her friendship with "them mad foreigners," as the villagers called them.

She found the Doctor and Mademoiselle Largentiere refined and amiable; Reine, whose relationship to them she could not determine, tractable as a rule, and devotedly attached to "Friend," as she insisted upon calling her; indeed, she followed her about like a faithful animal, and was contented if only Joyce would let her sit hours by her side, fondling her hands, or smoothing her pale, soft cheeks, her wealth of dusky hair.

So the days wore by, until three weeks of her holidays had passed, and as she sat talking in the dusk to Mademoiselle Largentiere, she could see Reine's slender figure moving slowly beside the doctor's, could hear his questions and her vague answers. He was evidently trying to recall something of the past to her darkened mind, and his sister sighed as she listened.

"Poor Francois! it is always the same; he never can give up hope of her ultimate recovery, although it is five years since we have seen her thus. But my brother has all along made a speciality of brain diseases, and in our own country was a man of note; in fact, he was an object of envy to his colleagues, and they even branded him as eccentric, which is another word for insane.

"Then he gave up practising and devoted himself in private to his special guest. Miss Greenway, would you like to hear the story of Reine the second?"

"Very much, if you will tell it me; her lot is unutterably sad."

"Well, first of all I must make you understand my brother's past history; he was quite young when he married, and his wife, our Eulalie, was an angel, but she died when Reine was born. Then all his love turned to her, and together we tried to spoil her; but that was impossible, for Heaven had sent us an angel in disguise.

"Reine grew up into womanhood, fair as a Saxon, mild in voice and manner; then came a lover, wooing—her father did not approve our French fashion, and allowed her perfect freedom of choice. Her *fiancé* was a Prussian and nice, despite his nationality; but he was killed by a fall from his horse. Reine was riding with him, his head fell even on her breast, and the shock robbed her of her reason. She lingered three years and then died, being conscious at the last. I feared at first I should lose Francois; but Heaven was good to me, my brother was not taken away; he lived to spend year after year in pursuit of this particular study, but his spirit was crushed, and the adverse criticisms of the world at large made him withdraw more and more into himself. We were staying at a little village close to Chateauroux, just five years ago—"

"Chateauroux!" exclaimed Joyce, adding quickly, "I beg your pardon, but the name is familiar, and I was startled; please go on."

"Well, we were walking very leisurely through a meadow when we saw Reine coming towards us; she was wearing no hat or bonnet, her hair was streaming about her shoulders, and her eyes were wild. She advanced to Francois and with outstretched hands begged him to take her away from those who would harm her.

"I was a little frightened, but Francois did his utmost to console her, and she clung to him with touching confidence. He declared that she had suffered some great shock which had for the time upset the balance of her mind, and then, partly because he was deeply devoted to his profession, but mostly because she was like our lost Reine, he insisted upon taking her back to our apartments. We made endless inquiries concerning her, but could not learn her identity; we heard there had been a serious accident on the line, close to Chateauroux, and we concluded Reine was one of the sufferers. But, as nothing could be discovered at the close of a fortnight, Francois said,—

"We will go home, and so long as she lives the poor soul shall have her lodging with us,

and with Heaven's help I will restore her to reason." It is a hopeless task, mademoiselle; but I have grown to love her, and her helplessness appeals to one's pity."

Joyce leaning forward laid her hand upon the elder lady's; she was very white and her breath came quickly as she asked,—

"Was there nothing upon her by which you might identify her—please do not keep anything back from me."

Mademoiselle Largentiere could not quite conceal her surprise as she answered,—

"She was wearing a wedding-ring with the initials M. and D. engraved inside; but in a frenzy she plucked it from her finger and would have trampled upon it but for my brother, in whose keeping it now is. Her linen, too, was marked M.B.—"

Joyce cried out suddenly.

"Oh, thank Heaven! Thank Heaven! all this awful suspense is ended. Mademoiselle, I think I can tell you who is your *protégé*. I believe she is Mrs. Douglas Boursnell, and her husband is even now searching for her."

"If that is true, Francois will be filled with sorrow; he will both lose his favourite and the chance of studying her disease. He has always declared that nothing will cure her but some sudden shock, and has tried all sorts of experiments to startle her into remembrance."

"Her husband's coming may do that; if indeed he proves her husband," said Joyce in a low tone, "and Monsieur Largentiere will be the first to rejoice in her happy recovery. I don't know where but I do know how to find Mr. Boursnell; have I your permission to send for him?"

"*Mon ami*, yes! How strangely things work together for good or ill; but—but, forgive me, is this Douglas a good man! Will he love our poor Reine less because of her altered looks and sad cross?"

"If you knew him," said Joyce, with a faint, sad smile, "you would not think it necessary to ask such questions."

A little later Joyce went away, and Mademoiselle Largentiere watching her, said pitifully.

"Ah, poor child, you, too, love this man with the name so hard to pronounce. Heaven help you!"

#### CHAPTER V.

DOUGLAS BOURSNEILL sat reading a letter from his solicitor, whose address he had fortunately given Joyce. The girl had at once applied to him for help, being firmly convinced that Reine was really the missing wife.

Now the husband, who had never given of his best to the woman who bore his name—who had never loved until Joyce's eyes looked into his—bowed his head, trying hard to pray that reason and strength should be restored to the sufferer, that she might yet live to share his home and fortune.

He almost hated himself that his heart sank as he learned that Mary might still be living; he had never loved her, and now life was dark indeed because of the shadow she cast upon it.

He was at Rouen when the news reached him, but he at once hurried homewards. Joyce herself apprised him of the fact that Mary refused to be parted from her, so that she must perforce spend the few remaining days of her rest at Shiffingsands. But she prayed him to see as little of her as possible, and promised to leave the village—despite Mary's remonstrances, if he should desire it, or felt himself unequal to the strain.

What a heavy heart he carried in his bosom as he walked up the rocky path to The Cottage. Joyce had been long with Mary (as all began now to call her), she had dressed the long fair hair in the most approved style, had chosen the prettiest gown out of all her wardrobe for her to wear, and had whispered over and over to the poor soul "He is coming to you—Douglas!—your husband. Mary, Mary! you should be very happy to-night." But Mary made no response, and evidently did not understand.

He came at last, pale and grave, with lips set

fast and eyes grown stern. The doctor met him with much kindness, and then he saw two slight figures advancing—Mary had refused to be parted from Joyce; she clung to her arm with almost cruel force. Nearer and nearer they drew, and Douglas, with a half-groan, saw in this poor demented creature his own loving, lovesome bride!

He stepped hastily forward, "Mary!"

She turned pettishly away from him to Joyce, "Tell him to go away! I do not know him! I hate him!" and hid her face like a chidden child on the other's bosom.

"Mr. Boursnell," said Joyce, in so low a tone that her words were inaudible save to himself, "be patient with her. Usually she is kind and good, and—and we hoped much from your coming. We trusted the shock of your re-appearance would restore her to herself, and I hope it will; oh, yes, with all my heart. I am going away to-morrow; you must console her for my loss, for she loves me dearly."

"Joyce!—Oh, Joyce!—What a life you condemn me to. What shall I say?"

"Good-bye! You know that means God be with you; and, so long as He abides with us, we can neither be utterly forlorn nor wicked. Mary, you would not like to make me sad; look up and speak kindly to Douglas. Remember how long and bitterly he has suffered. *Dear Mary*, be good; look at him and tell me that you know him again, and will try to get well, just to make him happy."

But, with a scream, poor Mary clung the closer to her, "Send him away, I hate him, I hate him! I will stay with you always."

"Come," said the doctor to Douglas, "this is too cruel for you. Leave her to Miss Greenway," and, with a sigh, he led his visitor to his surgery. "I suppose I must acknowledge myself beaten," he said sadly. "I hoped that she would recognise you, and the shock would restore her lost faculties. Now if ever she recovers her reason it will be at the expense of her life. Poor child! poor Reine! I cannot think of her as *Mary*; she is my little girl in look and misfortune—I can hardly separate the one from the other. Mr. Boursnell, what will you do in the matter?"

"My duty, I hope; but it will be very hard," and his chin sank on his broad chest. It was indeed a hopeless outlook; long years, perhaps a whole life, spent with this poor irresponsible being, whilst all his heart cried out for Joyce. What wonder that he regretted that marriage born out of pity, or that he found it hard not to pray Mary might be taken away from the world and him.

Largentiere watched him closely, seeming to read his every thought, and presently he said: "If the task is too hard for you leave the child with us; she is happy here and attached to us. I need hardly tell you that she shall have all the love and care we can bestow upon her."

"I know; and I can never thank you sufficiently for your great goodness to her. But for you, Heaven only knows, what might have been her fate. Poor little Mary! when last I saw her she was a smiling, happy bride. We were sitting side by side, her hand in mine, when the collision occurred. Apparently she escaped unhurt bodily, and my only possible explanation of her disappearance is that the awful shock, combined with the belief that I was dead, unhinged her mind, and she, extricating herself from the *débris*, wandered away, not knowing or caring where she went. But for my subsequent illness, I had never lost her. Now that she is found it is obviously my duty to minister to her."

"Your duty. Twice already you have used that word in reference to this subject. I wish you could say your *happiness*; but that is impossible, because you love Joyce Greenway. Ah my friend; you learn now the irony of fate. You are bound to Reine; she loathes you, but adores the woman who fills her place in your heart. It is hard to dwell upon; perhaps too hard for you to endure. If it is so leave the child with us and go your way."

"No, the fetters I riveted I will wear, and you need have no fear that Mary shall lack anything that I can give. She is my wife, and if I cannot love I do most sincerely pity her, and compassion will make me patient and gentle."

"That being so, I have only one suggestion to make. It is that you remain with us until Reine has grown accustomed to and less afraid of you. She would die of terror if you took her suddenly away from us."

"I shall be glad if you will allow this," and there for a while the matter ended.

He saw Joyce for a few moments alone that night; for his sake she was brave and strong. She knew that his strength was at its lowest ebb, that she must be the comforter and guide, at least, in this hour.

He caught her hands and held them clasped upon his breast, looking down at her with haggard eyes. His face was ghastly, and there were lines of cruel pain about the usually firm mouth.

"Must it be, Joyce? Oh! my beloved, must it be? Can I bear to let you slip out of my life—to lose you so irrevocably? Stay with me."

"Hush!" she said, sternly, although all her heart cried out to her to be kind. "You shall not forget your manhood, or teach me scorn of you. *There is nothing we can do save part*, and that with the fixed resolve to meet no more until the love which is now unholy is slain. You are a man; you should be stronger than I. Douglas, help me; do not lean upon such a frail support as I am. Be good to her; it may be Heaven will be merciful and restore her to reason, if not, doubly she will need your tenderest care. Oh! you must forget me, because I never had any lawful claim upon your love."

"Joyce, how cold you are! How easy it is for you to say good-bye."

She snatched her hands from his, then covering her face, moaned rather than said,—

"How cruel you are to me! Have you no mercy?"

"Have you any mercy upon me when you deliberately send me away, refusing me the solace of a word, a look; condemning me to life more bitter than death. It is you, and you alone, I love, and I cannot let you go."

"For shame!" she cried, passionately. "Do you realize the terrible insult your words convey? Will you make me regret the hour we met, or—or this last interview, granted you against my better judgment? What have I done that you should think so lightly of me?"

Her words recalled his better self; the pain and shame upon her face was cruel for him to see.

"Pity and pardon me!" he cried. "I was beside myself, but you have brought me to reason. I can see that there is no middle way for us; that our separation must be final; that no sign may pass between us any more. And so good-bye; but for your dear sake I will try to bear myself as a man, to remember just what you would have me do, and do it."

"Heaven will bless your efforts," she answered, all the scorn and anger gone from her face and voice. "Heaven will make the way less rough to your feet, and give you your reward at last. And I! Well, I shall live to be proud that the man I loved was worthy the best that I could give, and knowing this, I shall be a better woman all my life. Good-bye, Douglas."

She put out her slender hand then; he took and held it fast, whilst he pleaded,—

"Give me but one kiss, dear heart."

"No, no! I cannot; I dare not; I need all my strength. Oh! let me go!"

And without another word he released her, feeling her decision the wisest.

Early in the morning she returned to Camastowe; long before Mary had risen she was well on her journey, and on the morrow she resumed her duties.

She did not see Mrs. Sims for several days, but she heard that the story of Douglas Bournell's marriage had reached the town. She herself had advised him to make it public; still, it was not easy for her to listen to the wondering comments and harsh criticisms upon him.

It was at choir practice that she met her late landlady, and contrary to recent custom, Mrs. Sims approached her in friendliest fashion.

"So glad you are back again, Joyce (she would call the girl by her Christian name). I was just

dying to tell you the news. I hope no one has stolen a march with me. I told you what an atrocious flirt Douglas Bournell was, and always advised you not to give yourself away. I hope you will not be quite heartbroken, but he is married; tied the knot more than five years ago, and his wife is mad."

Joyce knew only too well the malice which prompted this speech. She was painfully aware, too, that the new curate, who showed a decided predilection for her society, must have overheard each word, so she answered in most distinct tones,—

"Did you not know that Mr. Bournell was a Benedict; how curious? And there was no need for your advice; in fact, knowing as I did that he had a living wife, I considered it a gratuitous insult."

"You knew it!" shrilled Mrs. Sims. "Oh! I say, you can't take me in like that."

"I hardly grasp your meaning, Mrs. Sims, but if, as I suppose, you think I am romancing, I can assure you that I only left Mrs. Bournell and her guardians a week ago. I spent the greater proportion of my holiday with them. Mr. Bournell returned to the family the day before my departure," and she turned on her heel, leaving the enemy discomfited.

"Sly little cat!" ejaculated the lady. "She knew it all the while, and never breached it to a single soul. Well, I've one consolation; she can't be Mrs. Bournell, and she can't lord it over me," but she always wondered why the curate was so frigid to her after this little episode.

## CHAPTER VI.

It was growing cold at Shiftingsands, and Mary, never strong, seemed to feel the change of weather very keenly, so that Douglas proposed a trip to Italy. He himself was looking years older than when he returned to England, for, indeed, life was very cruel to him. He had summoned the greatest medical lights to Mary; he had spared neither pains nor money in her behalf, but no good had been effected; he was told to hope for none. But the bitterest drop in all his bitter cup was that he hated and feared him. It was with the greatest difficulty she could be induced to remain in a room if he entered, and she would hardly suffer him to touch her hand. Once, in his pity, and perhaps because of his desolation, he stooped to kiss her, only to be thrust fiercely away; to hear the voice, once so sweet and tender, all jarred and out of tune as she cried—

"Go away! I will kill you if you try to do that again."

She clung obstinately to the doctor; she cried piteously for Joyce, upraising Douglas for taking her away, and perhaps no one could guess the depths of his suffering, save the woman who loved him and was far away from him. He had given up all hope and a dull despair was settling upon him when he received a letter from no other person than Mrs. Sims; she was nothing if not impertinent, and now she wrote condoling with him upon his sad affliction, ending with this paragraph which was the motive of her letter.

"And now, indeed, I have news for you. That coquette, Joyce, is all but engaged to Garry (our new curate); we expect the fact will soon be made public—but she is sly, and he is shy, and so nothing is definitely known yet. Still I do not expect she will prove fickle to him, as he is almost a rich man and has plenty of influential friends—it will certainly be a very good thing for Joyce—oh, she is a wise girl, and knows on which side her bread is buttered."

Over and over again he read those false words, until they burned into his very brain, and he was mad with the desire to see her, to hear from her own lips, if she had so quickly and so easily forgotten. But what right had he to complain, or to question her? Surely it was best to let the dead past rest. And so he did not even reply to Mrs. Sims; he knew that she had read his heart aright and wished to hurt him—it was her revenge for what she pleased to term the "slights he had put upon her."

But with the Largentiere's and Mary he

travelled to Italy, resting finally at Pavia. His wife's attitude towards him had by no means improved; it needed all his patience and strength to endure her caprices or submit to her passionate protestations of hate.

Mademoiselle Largentiere was full of pity for him, and did much to sustain him in this unequal conflict; but he sorely missed the sound of one sweet voice, the ring of brave, true words, and even when he most believed that Joyce had forgotten him, he could not love her less.

Away at Camastowe the girl was working hard, trying to live down her pain, and the love which she now counted sin; fighting with herself until both courage and strength gave way and the doctors agreed she must go abroad. She looked at them with a faintly mocking smile, saying—

"To live I must work; I have no friends—so despite your advice I must keep to my post."

Now David Garry heard this, and went at once to the girl. He was neither handsome nor clever; he was effeminate in ways and character, but possessed a good heart, which is indisputably a great treasure, and this heart he was prepared to lay at Joyce Greenway's feet.

She heard him with patience and pity; she scarcely even liked him, because she had learned to contrast all men with Douglas, and weakness of any kind was abhorrent to her; but his generosity touched her. She was poor and obscure, he had wealth and influence; his marriage with her would probably alienate his friends—she thought of all these things as she answered gently, but so firmly, that he knew there was no appeal against her decision.

"You have honoured me beyond my deserts, Mr. Garry, and I should be ungrateful, indeed, if ever I forget this. At the same time I must beg you not to renew the subject—I do not love you, I never can—and I think it extremely unlikely that I shall ever marry."

The pink colour faded from his womanish face. "It is true, then, that you cared for Bournell, as Mrs. Sims says?"

She flushed crimson, trembled, hesitated, then said bravely,—

"I will not deceive you who have been so generous to me. I did love him long before I knew of his marriage—now I am only his wife's friend—not because I love him less, for indeed my heart will not obey my reason—but because we know it is best that we should not meet again. Try to think as little harshly of me as you can, but give your compassion to him, for he sorely needs it."

He took her hands in his.

"You cannot hope to marry Bournell—if I said I would be content to wait until you were ready to become my wife—if I went further and added I should be happy to call you mine, even though I might have to wait years and years for the least little sign of affection—?"

"I should still answer no; just as little as I can understand second marriages where the survivor has really loved the first spouse, do I understand a woman placing a second idol in the place another once occupied. Mr. Garry, forgive me, but I have had my dream; I would not forget it if I could."

"But you will die if you remain here. I heard it said that a winter in England would mean death for you in your present state."

She smiled sadly.

"And I am in love with Death—I hope he will come quickly. I should not like to think that at the last I must depend upon charity and fill a pauper's grave; that is what will happen if I am long ill."

David Garry could make no answer, his heart was too full. It was true that out of his sufficiency he could supply her needs, but he knew that Joyce was too proud to accept any gift from him; so he did the wisest thing he could, and went straight to the vicar and his wife.

With much confusion he told them all his story, his love and his fear for Joyce.

The girl was a very great favourite with them, and Mrs. Benton instantly said,—

"If it were necessary, I would send Miss Greenway abroad at my own expense, although,

with our large family, we have not very much to spare; but this is quite needless. Miss Greenway can start on Wednesday next if she please—perhaps you remember my aunt, Miss Colston? Well, she has a fad for going abroad every winter, although really she is as strong as the proverbial donkey; and she needs a companion. She asked for our Jessie, but owing to her recent engagement, she is naturally unwilling to go—so I propose I should send Joyce Greenway in her stead. The duties are nominal, and Aunt Colston is kindness itself. Then, Guy" (turning to her husband) "Miss Lester is quite capable enough to manage the school in her superior absence."

And so in an incredibly short time everything was arranged, and Joyce left en route for Italy with Miss Colston, a lady verging upon sixty.

She was sharp of speech, good at heart, eccentric in dress and manners; but from the first she conceived a violent liking for Joyce, which soon culminated in love, so that the girl thought of the next three months with feelings akin to pleasure.

Almost as soon as they left England behind, Joyce began to gather strength. Then, too, she felt it incumbent upon her to do all that lay in her power for such a lenient employer as Miss Colston.

The latter, who knew her protégée's artistic tastes, said one day, with a shrewd look at her,—

"Of course we must go to Rome; you won't consider your education complete until you have visited the Eternal City. Equally, of course, you will go into raptures ever after at the mention of its name, although, perhaps, like the young lady who is nameless, you will remember it simply as 'the big place where she bought those lovely stockings.'"

"She must have been an American," laughed Joyce; "a girl of any other nationality would never be guilty of such a speech."

"I wouldn't like to be too sure of that. I once heard an English girl say, in answer to the question, 'What is your opinion of St. Paul's?' 'Oh, it's awfully slow. I don't care for that sort of thing, you know, and you will not catch me going again.' The same girl said of the plain tablet marking Dickens's resting-place, 'Oh, what a shame to drag me such a distance to see that thing.' I am old and crabbed, my dear, but as I stood beside the resting-place of one of our greatest and best of men, there were tears in my eyes."

"I should have risen in my wrath and slain that girl," said Joyce, with conviction. "What did you do, Miss Colston?"

"I said, 'My child, you had best hurry away before you are hooted for your crass stupidity by these good people round'; and she went. I rather think I frightened her; I'm sure I hope I did."

To Rome they went, and Joyce drank her fill of the beauties of the grand decaying city until she forgot to be always sad, and Miss Colston watched her with pleased eyes, the improvement in her manner and appearance being so great.

Wandering alone one day, she chanced upon a little chapel, half hidden by the tall houses amongst which it stood. Curiosity led her in, and the service being uncommonly good, she remained to the end.

An obsequious priest bowed to her as she passed out. He seemed inclined to speak, but Joyce had all a British girl's dislike to chance acquaintances, and passed on, with head erect, by the font, the shell containing holy water, through the quaint porch into the street.

And then she paused. All the blood fled from cheek and lip; for a moment she felt that she must die; for there before her, in the flesh, stood Douglas Boursnell. That the meeting was purely accidental she knew as she lifted her eyes to his, that were so full of pain, and her heart ached as she noted the ravages time and grief had made upon him.

She stood still, waiting for him to speak.

"Joyce! Why are you here? Is there anything you need? or that I can do for you? Walk on by me, and tell me all that has chanced since we met."

She obeyed, telling him rapidly of her fading health, and of Mrs. Benton's goodness.

He gave a great sigh, as though of relief; then asked,—

"And when are you to be married? I understood it was to be soon."

"Married! What do you mean? I shall never marry now, Douglas."

"But Mrs. Sims wrote me you were soon to become Mrs. Garry."

"It was kind of her, but rather premature," Joyce remarked sarcastically. "You are at perfect liberty to contradict the report."

"Joyce!" he began hurriedly, but she stayed him with a gesture.

"I will not hear another word. Where are you stopping? why are you here? and is Mary well?"

"We are here for her health, which gives us serious cause for anxiety. We have taken the Villa Cantozzi. Will not you come sometimes to lighten our gloom?"

"No, Douglas; you and I must remember and adhere to our compact."

## CHAPTER VII.

Joyce said nothing to Miss Colston of that meeting, but she was very careful to stay within doors for the two following days, hoping that the Largentiere party would leave Rome and so make any explanation unnecessary. But on the second night the doctor himself appeared at their hotel, and asked for Joyce. He was pale and worried, most unfeignedly glad to see the girl again. With French enthusiasm, he kissed her cheeks, her brow, her chin, then said,—

"My dear, I want you to return with me. Reine—I mean Mary—is taken with a sudden illness and calls always for you; we cannot comfort her; child, we know all the truth, and we promise you shall not see Douglas against your own wish. He has been more than mortal in his patience and kindness; Heaven send him his reward! It may be that Mary will recover her reason; she may even grow strong again—and the old love rise, Phoenix-like, in her husband's heart—"

"I pray it may be so," Joyce said earnestly. "Now let me tell Miss Colston all; yes—of course I will go with you—I am not afraid to meet him; he is strong and good; he will rather help than hamper my steps, and she needs me; for her sake both he and I can put self out of sight."

So she went with him, to find Mary lying delirious on her bed, raving at times, calling often upon the Joyce she loved and did not now recognise; telling out all the bitterness of her life before Douglas came to brighten it and care for her. Then she would mean for the husband whose presence for long months she had loathed, and cry out that he had been cruelly torn from her; she never could be happy any more. Day and night they watched incessantly, untiringly, all that love could give was given freely, and for awhile they snatched her back from the very jaws of death. Joyce was lying asleep upon a couch, when Mademoiselle Largentiere came to her.

"Waken, dear one," she said, "Mary is herself again! Ah, no! not the Mary we have known so long, but she who loved her bridegroom years ago. She does not remember us in the least; she will not recognise you, but she has asked for Douglas, and spoken of him with such love that—that—oh, don't mind me—I am old and growing foolish—that I cannot bear these things calmly. But you must come with me; Douglas has not yet seen her—and I am afraid that if you are not present that—that he may break down and so hurt her."

Joyce rose; she was whiter than the first snowdrop which heralds the spring, but she was very calm; so calm, that she stayed a moment to adjust her curls, to smooth the tumbled ribbons and lace of her dressing-gown; then she followed Mademoiselle into the sick room. What a changed face she looked upon; the light of intelligence made eloquent the somewhat pale-blue eyes, the white lips had lost their painful

indecision, and even smiled as the doctor leaned above her. Joyce she did not know, only some subtle instinct told her this was a friend, and she eagerly grasped the proffered hand, whilst she whispered,—

"Is he coming soon? Will he be very sorry when he sees me? I am so changed. How pretty you are! How kind you look; and although I feel it cannot be, I seem to have known you a long, long while. Perhaps you have heard I have been mad—did they tell you?—I thought I had lost him—Douglas, my husband—and then my heart broke and my reason left me—will he be sorry to call me wife when he sees me?"

"He will be glad; he has loved you and ministered to you so long. He suffered so sorely through the years of his solitude—"

"Ah, but I have changed since then. I was not ever pretty, but I was different to the woman I saw to-day in the mirror. Will you help me to look as I used?—I am sure you can—I want him to love me as he did so long ago—and he will be with me soon."

With fingers that trembled Joyce dressed the plentiful hair, adjusted the pretty wrap, and waited in anguish for the coming of Douglas, listening all the while to Mary's innocent prattle.

"I seem to have known you long ago," she said, fondling Joyce's hands, "perhaps it was in the time when all was dark to me, but that I cannot remember—"

"Do not try; only think of this; your husband is returning to you; he has loved you long, sought for you earnestly, and nothing can make him less tender to you—"

"No!" said Mary, humbly, "he was always pitiful to the weak, and sad; if you knew him as I knew him, you would be just as much afraid as I am to meet him—because I dread to see the love go from his eyes; to know that I am nothing to him any more."

Even while she spoke the door opened and Douglas entered; the woman upon the bed gave one wild shriek and fell back half swooning. Without a glance at Joyce—indeed he dared not look at her—he hurried forward, and raising her tenderly in his arms, said,—

"Mary! Mary! My wife! You are not afraid of me any more?"

One poor wasted arm stole caressingly about his neck, whilst a faint voice said,—

"Oh, husband! Oh, my husband! May I grow strong again for your sake. I want to make you happy, because so long you have suffered for me. I want to get well just to show you that I am the Mary who loved to serve you—keep me by you—do not leave me—the past has been so dreadful, and you never came—Douglas, are you sorry that you have found me?"

"My child, no; rest quietly now, to-morrow you shall tell me all you can remember; now kiss me, then lie still," and when he looked around he found that Joyce had gone. That night Mary slept in his arms, and he would not move lest he should waken her.

Step by step they led her back to life and happiness. To Joyce there was something very sad in her pathetic endeavours to please her husband. Her futile attempts to lift herself to his mental measure, and never by word or look did he show that she was not just as dear to him as she had believed herself to be in the dead past. She never knew that all his love had gone out to the girl she delighted to call friend, and she was more than content. Joyce's holiday came to an end, and she returned alone to Cam-stowe. The Largentieres, with Douglas and Mary, remaining abroad until April. Then the latter expressed a wish to see her native land once more.

"Better wait till June," said Douglas, "the weather will be warmer and more settled then. I am afraid of the keen winds for you."

Mary was very frail, so easily tired, so incapable of moving without assistance, and she was troubled by a dry hacking cough, which brought a look of pain to the doctor's face whenever he heard it. For once she was persistent in her desire.

"I am stronger than I used to be, let us all go back to the place where you found me. I cannot remember now anything connected with it, because the past is all a blank to me, but I feel sure it must be a lovely spot."

And much more she said in the same strain, until Douglas felt himself compelled to yield to her wishes. They travelled homewards by easy stages, and when they reached Shiftingands Mary was delighted. For a few days she was really stronger and better. Douglas would never forget the delight she showed when she discovered the first primrose hidden away in the garden, or the anxiety with which she watched the progress of the budding daffodils. It was a late season, and she said—

"I am glad it is so, because now I can watch all the world growing lovelier. Think, dear, what a number of springs I have lost. I shall prize all those that come doubly now."

Poor little Mary! poor little Mary! when another spring comes the violets would make fragrant her grave close by the sounding sea, and her eyes would have been long closed to the beautiful world she loved so well. April was wearing fast away, and she seemed so much stronger, that Douglas even proposed to take her to town for a week. She was delighted as a child at the promise of some great pleasure, and spent hours in designing her costumes. One afternoon she went to her husband with such swift light steps he could scarcely believe that it was she who had entered the room.

"Douglas, I want you to give me a very, very great treat. The sea is so blue and smiling, and the air so balmy, won't you row me out to Eynous Isle? I am a troublesome and exigente wife, but the fault is yours you know. You are quite spoiling me."

"I am not going to dispute your statement," he answered, smiling and drawing her down upon his knee, "but, little woman it is early yet to go sailing; wait awhile, I cannot let you run any risk."

"How good you are to me. But really there is no danger, and see how strong and well I grow in this pure air."

"And how robust you look!" with sad smile, "last night you scarcely slept for coughing, and the doctor will be angry with me if I take you."

She glanced poutingly up at him, then she said archly—

"If you told him I compelled you to go, don't you think he would rather pity you for being so terribly henpecked. Oh, don't deny me this request, and I promise not to make another until—until I feel inclined."

She had so evidently set her mind upon the short excursion, that Douglas had not the heart to refuse, so they started with a bright sky above them, and the little foam-crested waves lapping the boat as it sped on its way. Eynous Isle was well worthy a visit, especially at this season of the year, and under the vivid green hedges Mary gathered as many primroses and bluebells as she could carry. She was even loth to leave when Douglas noticed the white clouds gathering fast and obscuring the blue sky. The breeze had grown into a strong wind, and remembering her delicacy he was anxious to reach home before the storm broke. He rowed with might and main, but when they were scarcely more than half-way to Shiftingands, rain began to fall, slowly at first, then in torrents. He glanced anxiously at Mary who began to shiver, then he wrapped his coat about her shoulders, although she protested strongly against such a movement. When they reached the shore her skirts were wet, clinging about her knees and ankles so that she could scarcely walk. He lifted her in his arms and carried her towards the Cottage, she laughing all the while and declaring she had taken no harm. Mademoiselle Largentiere was waiting them, and at once hurried Mary to her room where a warm bath and some mulled elder were in waiting. She begged her to go to bed, but with a wilful shake of her flaxen head Mary answered—"Oh no, dear auntie (the name by which she called her good friend) I never felt better in my life, and I won't have Douglas made anxious. Presently I shall dress for dinner." This she did, coming down later in a pretty delaine, high at the neck, for the doctor had strictly forbidden her to expose her delicate throat. She wore a cluster of wild roses at her breast, and after dinner she sang to them for the first time since her recovery,

and for the last, although they did not then guess this.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

THE next day came: Mary awoke unrefreshed and aching in every limb; her head was heavy; she had no inclination to move; but, rather than alarm Douglas, she dragged herself out of bed and made her toilet as carefully as though she expected visitors. He entered the room just as it was completed, and remonstrated with her for rising. A faint smile curved the pale lips, "Oh, you forget how many months and years I have missed of your society; I am trying to make up for lost time."

"And you shall; we will breakfast together in your boudoir."

"If you please, I would rather go down; auntie will be worried if I keep my room. I am not nearly so delicate as you all suppose. Presently I shall astonish you all by my feats of strength. Oh! what are you going to do?" as Douglas suddenly lifted her in his arms.

"Carry you down, if you will insist upon going; put your arm about my neck. That is right; now we can travel in fine style."

How pitifully light she was; how painfully thin she had grown; but she laughed delightedly as he placed her upon the couch, and the next moment the tears filled her eyes as she kissed his hand, saying:—

"You are too good to me. You make me so happy that almost I forget there is another world beyond this. Sometimes I am afraid I love you too well to leave you even when my time comes."

"May it be long before I lose my Mary," he answered gently, for indeed her devotion and her helplessness touched him keenly; and, although he never could love her as he loved Joyce, she was very dear to him.

She was very cheerful all through the day, but towards night her spirits and strength began to flag, and the old distressing cough returned.

Douglas proposed that she should go to her room. With a little laugh she said: "Why will you always send me to bed early, like a small child?" Laughing she broke a blood vessel; and then all was confusion.

Douglas carried her to her room, and the local medical men were at once summoned to her aid. There was a long consultation, and the end of it was that they all agreed no hope remained for Mary. "Rapid decline," was the verdict; "break it gently to her, she has but a week or two at most to live."

It was mademoiselle who told her the sad truth. She turned her face to the wall, and lay quite silent for awhile; then, looking towards her friend with eyes filled with tears, she said: "I have known it all along, although I tried to hide it even from myself for my husband's sake. Oh, my poor boy! my poor boy! how will he bear it! He loves me so dearly, he will be so lonely when I am gone."

She never dreamed that he had not held her dearest in all the world. No doubt of his love could ever disturb her peace; it was better so, and no chance would undecieve her now. Presently she asked for him. He came, pale, grave, pitiful. She stretched out her poor thin hands to him, trying to smile as she murmured "Oh, my beloved, we must part. I do not wish to go, I have been so happy; but I am trying to say Heaven's will be done. Douglas, my own, I have brought you very little save grief and anxiety, so, perhaps, it is better you should lose me; and one day, when the pain of parting has grown less, you will find someone to comfort you. I shall know it and be glad. If you could care for Joyce I should have nothing left to wish for; I should like to see her before I die, and, one more word, I do not know how long I may be spared to speak, sometimes come to look upon my grave and leave a flower there. You will never quite forget me? Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! If I could have lived to show my love; if I could have served you in any way how happy I had been!"

He was almost choked with emotion as he listened to the faint and failing voice. Bitterly he reproached himself because sometimes his

burden had appeared too heavy to bear; he could only atone to her by added kindness, and, as he ministered to her, quickly and surely the sands of her life ebbed out.

One day she asked for Joyce. "It would be a good thing to see her before I die," she said dreamily. "Douglas, she is the girl you should have loved. She would make you a better wife than ever I could have done, even had not my sore trouble befallen me. And yet you always seem to avoid her."

It was on his lips to tell her all the truth then, but a glance from mademoiselle stayed him, so that Mary went on, in all innocence, wounding him cruelly: "You will try to love her for my sake, and because she was good to me. You will never know how good."

"Don't, Mary," he cried, falling on his knees beside her. "Let me think only of you now," and, as he put an arm about her, she smiled well pleased.

That night they sent for Joyce. The telegram reach her lodgings whilst she was at the Vicarage and it was forwarded to her. Garry looking at her saw her face grow white, and strained his ears to catch the words she spoke to Mrs. Benton. They were very few and simple, "You will forgive me that I leave so abruptly, but Mrs. Douglas Boursnell is dying, and has sent for me. If I go at once I shall catch the mail."

The elder lady looked at her half-curiously, half-pitily, then she said, "Pray observe no ceremony; go at once. Mr. Garry, will you take Miss Greenway down."

He at once offered his arm, and, as they went downstairs, he said: "I suppose there is no longer any hope for me, Miss Joyce?"

"There never was," she answered tremulously. "Please spare me to-night. I cannot bear much more, and in pity for her pain he obeyed."

"You have come at last, Joyce; I was afraid I could not linger to see you; and I so wanted to thank you for all the goodness of which I was not conscious, of which I knew nothing until Auntie enlightened me. How pale you are; the long journey has tired you; let Neston give you something to eat, then you must go to bed, because in the morning I want you all to myself, there is so much I have to tell you."

But when the morning dawned she was so weak that the doctor forbade any person but Douglas to go to her.

All through the changeful day he sat beside her, her head resting on his shoulder, her faint voice growing hourly fainter, telling of love and gratitude, until almost his strength forsook him, and he was fain to cry on her to cease.

Night came, serene and beautiful; Mary lay in the same position drawing her breath with pain, but on her face was a look of ineffable peace, and it was then that they brought Joyce to her.

She stretched out one frail hand to the girl who had been more good to her even than she could guess.

"You have come to say good-bye, dear; the end is very near now, and I do not wish to live, because now I know that I was never the wife for Douglas. I was always weak of will, infirm of purpose; neither brilliant nor wise enough to bear the honours he had lavished upon me; so I rejoice to go. He will be very lonely at first, because you see he will miss the love I gave him—it has been very real and deep—I had nothing else to give; Joyce, my dear Joyce, when time has healed his wound I should be glad to think that you were filling my place more worthily than I did; there, do not tremble so; I ask no promise, I would rather leave it all in His hands who knows best what is good for us."

She did not speak much after this; her strength was slipping away so fast; and as the night advanced they knew she had reached the very brink of the cold, dark river, which leads straight to the golden pathway.

With a smile still upon her face she turned to Douglas.

"I am going, dear—going oh, so quickly—there is not time to thank you all for your goodness—and my breath fails me—but each will understand what I would say." Then after a long, long pause—"Keep me close in your arms

until the last—I want to—die upon—your breast!"

And so she lay breathing out her life until the grey dawn crept into the room. Then with sudden strength she dragged herself erect, crying out—"I come! I come!—my beloved—good-bye—" and so fell back upon his heart to speak no more, although indeed, she lingered more than an hour, breathing ever more and more faintly, until they scarcely knew whether she lived or no.

The first flush of rosy dawn fell upon her peaceful face, her smiling lips; with a sob Made-moiselle said—

"Come away; our dear one has gone," and having kissed her, went weeping from the room, clinging desperately to Joyce.

They buried Mary in the quiet churchyard, within the sound of the moaning sea; soon the turf was green upon her grave, and bright flowers blossomed upon it; her little day was ended, but it was granted her to be mourned sincerely by those whose patience and generosity she had most taxed, so that in death she was more blessed than when she had lived, and loved, and suffered.

Joyce Greenway returned to Camstowe, and Douglas having made arrangements for the additional comforts of the *Largentieres* went abroad, for it was not meet that he should speak of love yet to the woman who held his heart in her grasp.

At Shiftingsands, the doctor and his sister mourned their loss, and spent the long hours of the lengthening days in beautifying Mary's last home; she had in her maddest moments loved flowers—she should even now have enough and to spare of them.

Eighteen months had passed by; the Reverend David Garry had been promoted to a living, but had not yet gone to his new home. He had still a "month of Sundays" to spend in Camstowe, and he was trying hard to nerve himself once more to approach Joyce.

He had a not uncomfortable opinion of his own merits and possessions; he really could not quite see how a girl in Joyce's subordinate position could close her eyes to the advantages of a marriage with him.

He had fifteen hundred a year in his own right; the living he had accepted would bring in another twelve. Why she would be mad to refuse him.

Thinking thus he made his way to the church; it was the night the choir assembled, and Joyce, of course, was there.

She was looking unusually well too, in a *paletot* of dark crimson cloth, edged with grey fur. He could not flatter himself that she showed him any particular favour, but he most certainly did not intend to be discouraged, and of course she remembered that he disliked "gushing women."

Mr. Sims touched the organ; up rose the full volume of voices, when the vestry door was opened and someone entered with the vicar, taking his seat near the lectern. One glance Joyce gave, and almost screamed aloud, for there before her was Douglas, and as her eyes met his she read the story of his undying love; like a weary child she sank into her seat; not another note could she articulate.

Garry saw her emotion, and his own face changed; what he had intended to say would never now be spoken, for he realized that hope was vain, and entreaties worse than useless.

The rehearsal was ended at last; gathering her books hastily together Joyce left the church with scant ceremony; but as she hurried down the shady walk she heard quick steps following her, and then a voice that said,

"What, not one word after all these long, long months? Joyce, am I to go or stay; it rests with you—tell me, which shall I do?"

She looked at him a moment with eyes full of tears.

"If it is for your happiness—stay—if my love still seems worth the having—"

He took her hand,—"Without it life would be valueless!"

"I told you so," said Mrs. Sims when she heard of the engagement. "I told you so, Will; that silly little wretch always meant to be Mrs. Bournell—and she has got her way."

[THE END.]

## LONELY.

—30:—

I AM very lonely, darling,  
Lonely and sad to-night,  
As I watch the dead leaves whirling,  
To vanish out of sight.  
And within my eyes come surging  
The hot, rebellious tears,  
While from out the gloom seems merging  
The shadow of coming years.

And I watch the people thronging  
Adown the darkening street,  
While I try to still the longing  
For the sound of your dear feet:  
Yet deeper grows the yearning  
As the hours of daylight wane,  
As I press my hot cheek, burning,  
Against the window pane.

And my life with all its dreaming,  
Its aspirations grand,  
The rays of hope that, gleaming,  
Disclose the promised land,  
Seems in this shadowy glooming  
To be a thing all vain,  
And my soul cries out its moaning,  
Like a creature wrung with pain.

And I ask you, O my darling,  
Ask you amid my tears,  
And while the dead leaves whirling  
Sounds faintly in my ears,  
To come and crush this feeling  
That's born with the twilight gloom,  
To hush these sad fears stealing  
Like phantoms through the room.

Come with your smile so cheering,  
Your spirit brave and strong,  
With your words so fond, endearing,  
That rouse my heart to song,  
And your joyous tones dispelling  
The forebodings in my heart,  
In my eyes the teardrops quelling,  
Till, alas! again we part.

C. W. B.

## FORTUNE'S MISTAKE.

—30:—

### CHAPTER VII.

THREE weeks had passed since Fortune and her brother reached Carlyon Court, and the girl sat alone in the pretty room allotted her with a line of care on her broad white forehead, and a look of anxiety shadowing her clear hazel eyes. Things were not going smoothly, she could hardly have put her fears into words; but she was conscious of a great uneasiness, a dim foreboding that this life of ease and luxury was bad for Dene, and would make him still more unfit for the career of hard work which seemed his only future.

As far as Fortune herself was concerned, the visit might have been termed a brilliant success. Lady Darnley petted her as though she had been a child of her own. Mr. and Mrs. Dover treated her as their special friend, the lawyer telling her, with fatherly kindness, he quite expected to lose his best copyist now she was growing such a popular person. The neighbours who came to Carlyon Court, were one and all delighted with Miss Langley, and more than one matron had ventured to remark to Lady Darnley it was a thousand pities Lord Carlyon had not fallen in love with his charming cousin, instead of with "that Miss Belden."

The use of the demonstrative pronoun told its own story. Iris was a hopeless failure in county society; whether she was too indifferent to trouble to please the people among whom her lot was to be spent, or whether the gulf between the card sharper's daughter and these proud ladies was too deep for anything to bridge over could not be said; but poor Lady Darnley was kept in perpetual terror. Iris was always contriving to offend someone, or to run counter to

someone's pet prejudices: she seemed to take a delight in shocking people.

"If I can't do as I like with ten thousand a-year," she had said flippantly to Lady Darnley only that morning, "why it's a pity."

"If Eric has his way, and you are married before January, you will only have about a quarter of that sum," said the elder lady very coldly; "and in any case it is a pity to make enemies of the people among whom you will have to live."

"I shall not live at Carlyon," said Miss Belden, determinedly; "why I should be moped to death. Eric knows perfectly that I detest the country."

It was of all this Fortune was thinking as she sat alone on that bright September afternoon; her heart ached for Eric. He had poured out all his love upon Iris. He was willing for her sake to give up his home and three quarters of his income, and in return she seemed to accord him nothing more than an indifferent tolerance. She was bored by his society, and never tried to hide that she preferred Dene's company to his cousin's. In fact, her manner to the poor relation was far more gracious than to her fiancé.

"Dene couldn't do it," thought poor Fortune, growing crimson at the thought. "After all Eric's kindness and generosity, he couldn't betray him and steal Iris Belden's heart. Well," with a sigh of relief, "at least she knows the value of money far too much to give up a rich nobleman for a poor clerk out of work, that is one comfort at any rate."

She rose, half-reluctantly, and went downstairs in search of her brother. Dene had avoided her very much of late, but now that only a week remained of their stay, it was really necessary she should have a little talk with him about their return to Guildford-street.

Fate favoured Fortune. She found Dene lounging in an arm-chair in the library, and, strange to say, alone. There was no one to whisper to the girl that Iris had only just left the room, and Dene's excited look was the result of an interview with her.

"Dene, I want to talk to you," began Fortune, a little timidly.

"Oh, hang it all, I suppose you've come to lecture me. Old Dover's been at me for an hour this morning. You might let a fellow have a little peace."

The sister who had given up so much for Dene felt a little hurt at this speech.

"I only want to tell you I am going home to Guildford-street next Tuesday."

"Nonsense, you can't do anything of the sort!"

"I must. I only came for a month, and that will be up then. I shall lose all my customers if I am away longer."

"Don't talk as if you were a charwoman. You know I told you, Fortune, you must give up all that rubbish copying. Eric's behaved very well. He's offered to pay for my articles to old Dover, and allow me five hundred a year till I'm out of them. It's not much considering his wealth; but rich men are proverbially mean."

Fortune's eyes flashed with indignation.

"It is a great deal more than you ought to accept. Dene, you can't mean you are going to sink into a pensioner on Eric's bounty."

"How very unpleasantly you put things, Fortune. It's his duty to do something for me as I'm his heir-at-law. I'm to stay here till the middle of October and then go to old Dover for a month on trial. I don't like that part of it. I feel sure the old wretch will lead me a dreadful life."

"Then, I shall go home alone on Tuesday."

"Nonsense; there's no occasion for you to go back to that wretched place. We'll have a nice little house somewhere in the suburbs, and you shall stay at home and look after the meals. I tell you there's to be an end to the copying."

Fortune shook her head.

"I would rather earn my own living honestly, until Paul has a home ready for me. You and I must part company now, Dene."

To her surprise, he made no further attempts to change her purpose. He seemed, she fancied, rather relieved.

"Well, if you choose to make a martyr of yourself, I can't help it. Things are pretty hard on me, Fortune; I don't want your reproaches to add to my worries."

"I don't see that you have any worries," replied his sister. "With Eric's allowance you will be well off."

"Five hundred a year! and he has ten thousand! I should make a much better master of Carlyon than he does. I'm older, too."

"Well," and Fortune's voice was full of indignation, "if you grudge Eric his position, you ought not to say so. Besides, if he marries soon he will lose most of his income."

"He has postponed his marriage till after his next birthday."

"What does Miss Belden say to that?"

"It was her wish; she could not bear to rob him of his fortune. She is as generous as she is beautiful. I must say, you treat her very badly; your cold disapproval is most trying to her."

"Well, our paths in life will be far enough apart," said Fortune, coldly. "A countess is not likely to feel the disapprobation of a copyist."

"You really mean to go on Tuesday?"

"Yes."

"Well, I must be off. I promised to meet Carlyon at the Mere. He was going to see his agent on business, and said he should start back about half-past five o'clock."

Fortune Langley left the room. She did not feel disappointed or surprised. For some weeks now it had been gradually dawning on her that she and Dene were drifting apart, and ever since she came to Carlyon her fears had been growing into certainties. Her lover had been right in telling her she had sacrificed too much to Dene, and this—this was the result.

Fortune was very lonely this afternoon. Lady Darnley had taken Mrs. Dover to make calls; the lawyer was writing business letters in his own room; some of the younger guests were playing tennis; there seemed absolutely no one about when Miss Langley passed through the beautiful old hall with a letter in her hand.

Of course in such a well-ordered establishment as Carlyon Court there was a letter bag, which was fetched by the postman every night. But Fortune had a girlish love of posting her letters to Paul with her own hand. He did not get them a minute the sooner; it was just a dreamy feeling she liked to know that she had gone as far as possible with her loving words on their journey to Paul. She was not quite easy about him. True, he wrote that Lord Fane was kindness itself, the duties of his position were light, he had abundant leisure for his own work; but of late there had been a growing constraint in his letters. Perhaps he did not like to feel that Fortune was visiting an earl as a relative and equal. Perhaps (though she had told him about Iris Belden) he feared Eric's old brotherly love for his pretty cousin might ripen into something deeper.

Fortune posted her letter at the little office in the village street, and then, instead of retracing her steps, a fancy took her to extend her walk, and she turned in a contrary direction, following a long winding lane, which to her was new ground. Suddenly a turn of the lane revealed to her a spot where four roads met, and a sign-post with four hands had been fixed to guide strangers on their way.

Fortune started, her knees seemed to tremble under her with nervousness, for this was the sign-post she had seen in her dream that last night in Guildford Street.

She stood for quite ten minutes wondering which path to take. To turn back the way she had come would mean four miles' walk before she reached Carlyon, but another road bore the cheering notice on the guiding hand "To Carlyon, 2½ miles." Why should she not take that? True, in that terrible dream she had chosen the path marked "To Carlyon," and it had ended in a fearful gulf which divided her for all time from Paul. But feelings are widely different in the daylight to the fears which come to us in the still, solemn hours of the night. How could it possibly alter her life, she asked herself, if she went along this pleasant shady lane? What possible penalty could she pay in the future for

saving herself the fatigue of two miles extra walk now.

The lane quite fulfilled all Fortune's expectations; it was pleasant, for the September sunshine lighted up the hedges, and rested lovingly on some nuts which had escaped the despoiling hands of the village children. The girl walked cheerfully on, now and again singing the refrain of a popular ballad from sheer content at the beauty of her surroundings. She had forgotten Dene and her last talk with him; she was thinking only of the beauty of the scene and wondering whether, if she and Paul found a home near Netherton, it would be as picturesque as the pretty gabled cottages scattered over Eric's estate.

The road ended sharply, turning abruptly to the left; but straight in front of her stretched a lake so beautiful she knew at once it must be the far-famed Mere, of which she had heard so much.

Carlyon Mere was a long narrow sheet of water, bordered on one side by weeping willows, while on the opposite shore stood a boat-house just large enough to hold a tiny skiff in which Eric was accustomed to paddle himself across. Just beyond one end of the Mere was a group of thick trees, and, after that, a tiny gate in the thicket hedge led into the private part of the Court grounds. The further end of the Mere was bounded by a wood, through which was a path leading to Shemington, a village some miles off.

Anything wilder or more beautiful than the lake it was impossible to imagine. A dreary spot, perhaps, in winter, but now with the sun glinting on the trees and casting its bright reflection on the water the scene was perfect.

Fortune stood for one moment almost spell-bound by admiration, and then there rang out clear and loud the report of a gun; the girl shivered and well nigh fell into the lake, so terribly sudden had been the sound; she could not see who had fired it, but her instinct told her the shot came from the clump of trees at the further end of the lake. Brave by birth and character the girl walked resolutely on, intending to search the thicket and see if there was anyone to whom she could carry help; but before she reached the spot she met her brother coming rapidly towards her.

"Dene!"

And she clung to him with almost a child's craving for comfort and protection.

"Dene! What has happened? Who is hurt?"

It seemed to her now at that moment there was something unusual in his manner as he answered—

"Why, you foolish child, no one's hurt. What are you dreaming of?"

"I—I heard a gun go off. Dene, let me go." He still held her arm. "I must see who is injured, and try to help them."

Dene laughed.

"Don't you know that Sir John Freeman has a shooting party. His preserves begin the other side of the Mere. I've heard the guns popping after partridges the last half-hour."

"I thought you went to the agent's to meet Eric."

"So I did; but Armstrong's not seen him. Between ourselves, Fortune, I fancy our respected cousin is not a very good man of business. And now, young lady, unless you wish to be late for dinner, you'd better let me escort you home."

"Is it really so late?"

"It's after six, and Lady Darnley will have dinner at seven, though it's quite old fashioned."

Fortune smiled.

"Seven o'clock dinner would have seemed very grand to us a month ago. There, Dene, I did not mean to vex you. Come along. I am glad I met you, for that shot frightened me; I thought something terrible had happened."

"One more partridge departed this life," said Dene, cheerfully. "Come along."

But when they had passed the thicket and were safe in the Court grounds, Dene relaxed his pace. He told Fortune he was tired, and there was no occasion to hurry so very much. He even insisted on resting for a few minutes on a rustic bench; and then, though the evening was by no means hot, he took out his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his face.

"Dene, don't you feel well? Is there anything the matter?"

"I'm as right as a trivet—but I've walked hard on eight miles, and I feel tired."

She did not speak again till they were in sight of the Court. Fortune would have liked to run in by the side entrance, but Dene had her hand on his arm and insisted on taking her through the hall. Several people were there, though the dressing bell had already clanged forth its warning.

"Have you seen Carlyon, Dene," asked Lady Darnley; "he promised to be home by six."

"He is the most unpunctual man," said Iris Belden lightly. "I do hope, Lady Darnley, you won't put off dinner on his account."

"You had better go and dress," said the old lady, coldly. "Dene, you have not answered my question."

Dene looked up as though she had just started him from a dream.

"Seen Carlyon?" he repeated lightly. "No, that I haven't, he played me a shabby trick—asked me to walk as far as the Mere to meet him on his way back from Armstrong's, and then never came."

"Mr. Armstrong knows we dine at seven," said Lady Darnley severely; "he ought not to keep Eric."

"He hasn't had the chance," returned Dene, lightly. "I went on as far as Armstrong's, thinking I had mistaken the time Carlyon fixed; but Armstrong declared he had never been there. The Earl fixed five o'clock, and he'd been in all the afternoon expecting him."

"It's very strange," said Lady Darnley, uneasily, "very strange indeed—I don't like it."

George Dover's pleasant voice came to the rescue.

"There's nothing to be uneasy about, Lady Darnley, Carlyon knows every yard of his estate—to tell you the truth, I expect he has changed his mind about going to Armstrong's; he's by no means fond of business, and puts it off whenever he can."

The guests went off to dress. Lady Darnley, already in her soft, black silk, remained where she was, waiting and listening, growing every moment more uneasy.

At last, when it only wanted five minutes to seven, she rang the bell and began to cross-question the butler.

"My lord started to go to Mr. Armstrong's," the man declared. "I let him out myself. He told me he was a bit behind time; he was carrying his gun."

"Whatever for?" exclaimed the lady really alarmed.

"He said he meant to lend it to Mr. Armstrong my Lady; Sir John Freeman had asked him to join the shooting party to-morrow, and Mr. Armstrong had no gun, his own being out of repair."

"Can you remember the time?"

"Yes, my lady, it was about five—I know Mr. Langley started ten minutes later; Lord Carlyon was writing letters in the library which delayed him."

"In the library," exclaimed Lady Darnley; "Mr. Langley was alone there when I looked in."

The butler made no attempt to explain his story, he was quite certain that Lord Carlyon came from the library. He said he was starting later than he expected through having had letters to write; and with this explanation my lady had to be content.

Perhaps the butler had his own misgivings, though he spoke encouragingly to Lady Darnley, for he waylaid Mr. Dover as the lawyer was leaving his dressingroom and requested a word with him.

"Beg pardon, sir, but it's past seven, and Lord Carlyon's not come in."

"He may be detained at Mr. Armstrong's."

"He may, sir," then after an ominous pause, "We have just discovered the gun he took with him was loaded."

George Dover started.

"What do you mean—speak out."

"It's uncommonly rough ground, sir, if he

went the nearest way, which is by the Mere, and guns have gone off accidentally before now."

"Lord Carlyon is the most unpunctual man I ever saw," said George Dover, hastily; "his being an hour late instead of a few minutes would not surprise me."

"No, sir—"

The man hesitated.

"He's never been late for a single meal since he brought Miss Belden to the Court. She's sat next him every night since they came, and I don't believe he'd leave her to walk into the dining-room by herself without grave cause."

Mr. Dover started, putting the butler's thought into different words, he endorsed it. He did not believe Carlyon would leave his lady-love to get through a dull, formal, dinner-party without his countenance.

It was a large party. A dozen guests had been invited from the neighbourhood, besides those staying in the house. It was a great regret to these to find their host missing. Lady Darnley's self-possession never failed her. She explained to the most important of the matrons that her nephew had been detained on business with his steward, and with desperate effort she struggled to make those interminable minutes in the drawing-room pass pleasantly, while she waited with strained ears for the sound of Eric's coming. In vain: the clock on the mantelpiece struck the half-hour. Lady Darnley, almost distracted, gave the signal to the servants and they went in to dinner. Lord Norman, her own destined cavalier, taking in Lady Forrester, and Dene Langley giving his arm to Iris.

One empty place at a dinner party is enough to mar the success of the entertainment, but this vacant place was the host's, and so the failure was complete. From a superstitious feeling Lady Darnley would not ask Eric's cousin to fill his place. With Mr. Langley present she could ask no one else, so the vacant chair was removed and a large silver bowl of flowers deposited in the space where Eric's plate should have been.

It was a gruesome meal. Everyone's thoughts were of the missing host. Fortune wondered what Eric *could* be thinking of. She had heard nothing of the loaded gun he carried, or things might not have been such an enigma to her.

Dinner was over at last, the ladies retired to the drawing-room. Mr. Dover, fearing things were growing serious told the gentlemen the butler's story, and a general feeling of dismay arose, shared by all except Dene Langley.

"Eric has carried a gun from his childhood, he must know every foot of his own land, he couldn't have an accident."

But the others were less sanguine, and at last it was arranged that a search party should start for Mr. Armstrong's, examining every bit of the ground they passed. Mr. Dover, Lord Norman, Dene Langley and the butler were to go accompanied by two stout under-gardeners carrying a stretcher and rug; for so rapidly had the alarm grown, everyone but Dene Langley now felt certain they would find the missing man lying wounded by the roadside.

The other men were to join the ladies and do their utmost to keep up their spirits and prevent them learning the grave anxiety entertained for Lord Carlyon's safety.

The search party carried lanterns, for it was pitch dark, the moon would not rise for another hour, and the way they had to traverse was lonely and desolate. As the door of the Court closed after them with a melancholy clang, a kind of presentiment seized on George Dover that it was all in vain. They had started too late, and would surely find Eric Earl of Carlyon past all human aid.

## CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE cloud hung over the party in the drawing-room, in spite of Lady Darnley's best efforts, ably seconded by the gentlemen guests, things would not go as usual. People broke off conversation abruptly to listen to some passing sound as though continually on the alert, and every moment expecting something to happen. It came as a positive relief to the distracted

hostess when soon after ten, Lady Forrester set the example of taking leave, and in a few moments the dozen guests asked for the dinner party had dispersed, leaving only the few people staying in the house for her to entertain. Mrs. Dover crossed the room and spoke in a low tone to Lady Darnley.

"I cannot bear to go to bed until Lord Carlyon is safe at home; will you think us intruding if we sit up to keep you company?"

"I would far rather. I dread being alone, but," her hand tightened on the other's arm, "where are your husband and Dene Langley?"

It had to come.

"They have gone to search the road between here and Mr. Armstrong's—just as a precaution you know."

The old lady answered—

"I shall never see my boy again. Oh, Mrs. Dover, you can't think how I loved Eric, he was so like his father, who was like my own son."

Mrs. Dover tried to cheer her by speaking hopefully.

"Indeed, it may only be a slight accident, dear Lady Darnley, a sprained ankle or something of that kind. See, your graveface is quite frightening Miss Langley, she looks like a ghost."

Fortune was indeed deathly white, she drew a trifle nearer to Lady Darnley, and the kind old lady put one hand on her bowed head.

"You must not fret, my dear. I may be only a foolish old woman, but I am frightened. To go to Mr. Armstrong's Eric would have to pass the Mere, and it has been fatal to so many of our race. My own father met his death in those beautiful treacherous waters."

"Now Lady Darnley," cried Jack Norman kindly, "you mustn't think of that. I assure you my father declared he didn't believe there was anything wrong. He told the butler they'd most likely find Lord Carlyon safe and sound smoking a cigar with his agent. By-the-way where is Miss Belden, is she so upset she has gone to bed?"

"I think she went up to her room some time ago," said Fortune.

But Iris had done nothing of the kind; her father after a very brief stay at the Court, had returned to London, and affection or some other cause, prompted Iris to send him long letters almost daily. Feeling unutterably dull, she had stolen away to the library, thinking she might as well get her filial duty accomplished.

The library was a long narrow apartment, divided in the centre by thick curtains of crimson velvet which made it into two separate rooms. The smaller of them, furnished with a long oaken table, and every convenience for writing was often used by Lord Carlyon as an office to see people or transact business. The other was the library proper, furnished with every luxury from the well-filled shelves which lined the walls, to the table piled with papers and magazines. It was a favourite haunt of Lord Carlyon's guests. It was here Fortune had held her conversation with her brother that very afternoon.

Iris quietly pushed aside the curtain and entered the inner room in search of writing materials. As she sat down at the table, she found a letter directed to herself. A strange change passed over her face as she read the superscription, for the writing was only too familiar to her, her hand trembled as she broke the seal, and unfolding the sheet, read the few, brief lines. They might have touched the coldest heart, but they did not seem to move Iris Belden. She sat down in a low chair, placed the letter in her pocket, and apparently giving up the idea of writing to her father, seemed lost in a reverie.

"It would be too terrible," she muttered, slowly. "Such an awful calamity can't be true. I won't believe it, it is too awful."

She was looking very beautiful to-night, some fancy had prompted her to wear white, and it suited her to perfection. Sitting there alone in her white dress she looked an innocent girl. Alas, alas! it was years since innocence had been her portion, and to-night another dark memory had been added to the many which lay heavy on her conscience.

The door opened noiselessly, and Fortune

Langley came in. Little sympathy as there was between her and Iris, she could not refuse Lady Darnley's request, that she would "find that poor girl, and try to comfort her." Privately, Fortune had thought Iris too callous to be in need of comfort; but her feeling changed as she saw the white, set face, and the stony despair in the glittering eyes.

"I am so sorry for you," began Fortune, gently, "but indeed you must not be too cast down. Lady Darnley still hopes we may have good news of Eric."

Iris Belden wrung her hands. Was her alarm real or feigned? She caught hold of Fortune's hand and held it in a vice-like pressure.

"I shall never see him again. I have lost him for ever, and he loved me so."

The last was strictly true; never in the world's history had woman been more beloved by man, than Iris by Lord Carlyon. He had centred his every hope, his every desire on her. He had given her his whole heart, his entire faith.

"You must take courage," urged Fortune; "indeed, there is hope still. Any moment they may bring him home."

"Is he drowned?" Iris was shivering. "I know the Carlyons' dread the Mere. They say its waters hold many dark secrets, but Eric was so brave and true. He had not an enemy in the whole world. There was not a creature who would seek his life."

Fortune said gently she was sure of it, and that she did not believe Eric had fallen into the Mere, at the hour he would have passed it, it would still have been daylight. He knew every step of the way, and could not have lost his balance.

"It will all come right, Iris," she said gently, "he will be here soon to laugh at our fears."

Iris caught hold of Fortune's arm, and turned the girl's white face full under the light of the lamp.

"Do you wish Eric to come home?" she hissed. "Do you really hope he is uninjured?"

No shadow of her meaning came to Fortune, as she answered,—

"Of course I do. I have loved Eric almost as a brother for years."

"But you have a brother of your own?" persisted Iris. "If Eric died Dene would be Lord Carlyon! Do you forget that?"

A pain like a knife pierced Fortune's heart; but she uttered no complaint. She was very patient with this fevered impulsive creature.

"I have forgotten nothing, Iris; but when Eric comes home safe there will be no one, not even you, more glad than I."

"Hark!" said Iris, feverishly, "what is that?"

There was a sound of footsteps. Fortune drew her breath in quick, painful gasps, and then moved to the window, threw up the sash and stepped out on the terrace. The moon was up now, and by its soft, silvery light, she could just distinguish a procession of dusky forms coming up the drive. She had no time to speak, Iris had followed her and seen the group for herself.

"There has been an accident," she faltered.

The news must have reached the drawing-room. Lady Darnley, in spite of all persuasions, came out into the hall, followed closely by Mrs. Dover. Jack Norman stood in front of the two ladies, perhaps with the thought of screening from them a painful sight. A crowd of frightened servants gathered in the background, and with the door flung wide open and the moonlight pouring into the hall with weird brightness, they waited. For what?

The first of the sad procession must have seen them and hurried on in front of the rest. George Dover took Lady Darnley's hand in his and said eagerly:

"Do come in; indeed it is no fit sight for you. Do go upstairs, my dear Lady, and wait till we send for you."

But she shook off his detaining hand, and kept her place firmly.

"Eric is all I have, Mr. Dover. What he can bear to suffer I can bear to see."

Mr. Dover turned from her to his wife.

Mrs. Dover just gave him a glance to say Lady



"I MUST SEE WHO IS INJURED, AND TRY TO HELP THEM," SAID FORTUNE, ENDEAVOURING TO RELEASE HERSELF FROM DENE'S GRASP.

Darnley was past her persuasion, and then she flung open the door of the morning room and pointed to the sofa, hardly knowing what she feared.

"Tell them to bring him here, George. It will be easier than carrying him upstairs, and, oh, should not someone go for the doctor?"

"Pearman has gone," said Mr. Dover quietly, and then he signed to two stalwart figures to bring in their burden and place it on the sofa.

Lady Darnley, with a bitter cry, flung herself on her knees and took her nephew's cold still hand in hers. Dene Langley, calm, stern and silent, stood at the foot of the couch looking at the quiet motionless form. Iris Belden, with passionate sobs, called on her lover to speak to her. Fortune had turned away. She could not look at Eric's face—she simply could not.

What was it that Mr. Dover was saying, as in a dream she heard him telling his wife how they had found the earl lying insensible under a willow tree in the thicket close to the Mere. How it was evident he must have stumbled in hurrying quickly over the rough ground, and the gun which he was carrying have gone off accidentally.

"It is such a lonely spot," she heard him say, "no one passes for hours sometimes. Anyone coming from Armstrong's house must have seen him."

The room and all its occupants seemed to whirl round Fortune, and memory with blows like a sledge hammer forced her to recall three facts. Standing on the opposite side of the Mere, she had heard the sound of a gun going off. She had been starting to try to find the injured person when she met Dene, who assured her the gun belonged to one of Sir John Freeman's shooting party, and that the victim was only a partridge. Yes, and Dene had been coming from the direction in which she had heard the gun.

Oh why did such a pain pierce her heart! Why did she remember things so clearly, so vividly! Had not Dene hurried her back to the Court, making her enter by the grand entrance,

and pass through the hall, that everyone might see them enter together?

Was she going mad or what? Why did two things ring in her ears with such cruel distinctness? Was it this afternoon, or years ago, that Dene had spoken slightly of his cousin's generosity; saying: "He's bound to do something for me, since I am his heir-at-law?" Could it be only a few moments since Iris had said "If Eric died Dene would be Lord Carlyon—do you forget that?"

The housekeeper had been applying restoratives, but with little hope of success, for the conviction that Lord Carlyon was dead had come to all who saw his white calm face; but in a few minutes, though they seemed like hours to the anxious watchers, a tall grey-headed man appeared at the door of the morning room and made his way to the sofa, all those near Lord Carlyon giving place to him.

Dr. Turner made a brief survey of the young earl, and then he said gravely: "He has been dead for hours. The bullet went through his heart, and death must have been instantaneous."

There came a sound of sobs from the women. Iris Belden flung herself beside the couch, and took the dead man's hand, covering it with kisses "It can't be true," she cried piteously. "Oh, Eric! Eric!"

Mr. Dover signed to his wife, who, with Dr. Turner's assistance, raised the weeping girl, and, leading her from the room, gave her into the hands of her maid. Lady Darnley, tearful and sorrowing, had gone too; but Fortune still stood spell-bound, as though she had no power to move or speak. Her eyes were fixed on her brother's face with a world of terror and condemnation in their clear depths. Everyone else thought poor Eric's untimely fate an accident, but Fortune believed the gun had not gone off through Lord Carlyon's stumbling over the uneven ground. To her the truth was clear. Dene Langley, her only brother; Dene, for whom she would have died gladly, had done this deed. He had killed

the cousin who had loaded him with kindness because Eric's life stood between him and wealth.

Suddenly, as in a dream, the wretched girl heard Dr. Turner's voice: "Lord Carlyon, persuade your sister to follow the example of the other ladies and retire. This is no place for her."

Fortune looked wildly round. Was the doctor speaking to Eric? and who was Eric's sister? But no; dead men are not asked to persuade people. A look of triumph crossed Dene's face at the address, and Fortune, with a spasm of pain, understood.

"Come, dear," said her brother; "you had better go upstairs."

He had put out his hand to lead her away, but she shrank from his touch as one who fears a blow. Her eyes had passed from him to her cousin's face—beautiful in its last calm sleep—and, with a bitter cry, she fell senseless to the ground.

(To be continued.)

THE beard has been the subject of taxation in many countries. Peter the Great of Russia fixed the price of this luxury in that country at a sum equal to 4s. per annum for a noble and 4d. for a serf, and in the reign of Queen Elizabeth the tax in England was 3s. 4d. for every beard "of a growth above a fortnight."

NATURAL science is not only occupied with great and important problems, but devotes considerable attention and thoroughness to very small ones. A medical scientist has given two years of ardent study and research to the problem of dust particles in the air, and the result of his examination is that in mountainous regions 696 particles of dust are allotted to each cubic half-inch of air in one year. In London 100,000 particles of dust fall to each cubic half-inch of air during the same space of time, and other large cities are not likely to fare better than this approximation.



"FAREWELL, MADAM," QUAVERED GABRIEL GAUNT, SPLUTTERING FORTH HIS WORDS IN HIS WRATH.

## LOVE IN A MAZE.

—30:—

### CHAPTER XII.

#### THE DISCOMFITURE OF AN ANCIENT BEAU.

"WOMEN," we have been told by a great authority, "are indeed indefinable; strong and weak by turns, indiscreet, dissembling, they are capable of anything."

Be that as it may, here was another difficult moment in the life of Elizabeth Dawson; for it was by no means the first she had experienced since she had sailed from the safe haven of Santa Rosa.

But a woman's wit—a clever woman's wit—will dare and accomplish anything—as has been hinted above.

The Honourable Colin Chepstowe was still staring through his glass at the advancing mincing old man from Maydew—dumbfounded at the audacity of Dr. Gabriel Gaunt.

What did he want at The Granary—the presumptuous, absurd old ass! Clearly nobody had sent for him; nobody wanted him, professionally or otherwise; therefore the Honourable Colin would have liked to kick him back again.

Marking Colin's puzzled and abstracted air, Aunt Betty drew Susy hastily a step rearward. She had rapidly made up her mind how to act, though she had told herself at first that she was lost. Now she was resolved to show fight.

"Let us go and meet him; we won't have him in; and it will save a heap of bother in the long run. You follow my lead, dear," she whispered. "Come!" cried Miss Dawson aloud, in a business-like tone, "suppose we go and ask him what he wants of us, the droll old figure! It is hardly kind and hospitable, I know; but if he once gets inside, there is no telling how long he may hinder us. These very old people are always so prosy."

"I expect he's come worrying round for some subscription or other—charity and that, don't you know," murmured Colin.

Unquestionably nervous, though she managed not to appear so in the least degree, Elizabeth Dawson now marched forward to do battle with the enemy—or rather the ridiculous foppish old friend of eighteen years ago, whom circumstances now decreed should be denied.

It was hard perhaps—but it was inevitable! Susy and Colin followed their spirited leader, the former wondering helplessly what on earth was about to happen to them; the latter "to back her up," as he said.

"It is scarcely fair," said Susy to Colin. "We are three to one!"

There was a circular plantation of mixed shrubs, chiefly rhododendrons, with a mossy bank all round it, in front of the porch—a plantation encircled by the smooth carriage-drive, and they met for the contest upon the further side of this shrubbery.

Old Gabriel Gaunt swept his hat from his shining skull and bowed to the ladies in an elaborate manner. He then steadied himself upon his walking-stick and squeaked out,—

"Have I the honour of addressing—a Miss Elizabeth Dawson; rather should I say Miss Dawson; years ago of this identical house, The Granary, and—a—a—well-known and esteemed in the neighbourhood—a; but more recently of Santa Rosa Island? I am—a—Dr. Gabriel Gaunt of Maydew. May I venture to express a hope that—a—that I am not quite forgotten by my old friend, Elizabeth Dawson?"—with another beautiful bow and smile.

Time had played cruel pranks with the eyesight of this ancient squire of dames. He puckered up his shrivelled, painted cheeks, and peered at Susy and smirked at Aunt Betty; looked from one to the other in a puzzled, hesitating sort of way, smiling all the while, and showing in this ghastly, fixed, wide grin, a set of surprisingly youthful-looking teeth—a truly pitiable old man; a sight to make the angels weep.

Miss Dawson eyed him unflinchingly.

"At present I cannot determine whether I

remember you or not, sir," said she, with cold dignity.

"Ek—eh, what?" cried old Gabriel Gaunt sharply. "B—b—bless my soul!" he stuttered, "not remember me! But then," carefully, with trembling waxen fingers, adjusting his *pince-nez* which dangled upon a ribbon round his neck, "you are not—you cannot be—the Elizabeth Dawson I used to know. Surely, madam, it is impossible?"

"I certainly am Miss Dawson of The Granary," replied Aunt Betty, in the same distant level manner, "and my Christian name is Elizabeth. I being the—sister of the late Oliver Dawson, this," with a slight introductory wave of the hand, "is of course, my niece Susan, whom we have always called Susy, and who is Susy still."

"What! This is really little Susy Dawson who went away from Maydew a youngster of five, and sailed with her daddy to Santa Rosa Island!" exclaimed the old gentleman playfully. "Heaven b—b—bless my soul! you don't say so. My dear," with his courtliest bow, "you have grown into a very pretty young woman!"

"Thank you," said Susy demurely, pitying secretly the mystification of the poor purblind old fop. Were not they treating him very wickedly, she wondered? whilst Colin Chepstowe, standing by with supercilious pink eyes and a thin, supercilious smile curling his lips, awaited his opportunity to join in the conversation.

"But—but," stammered the old gentleman, in increasing perplexity, "there were two of you, I remember! Oliver Dawson had two —"

"My sister is dead," put in Susy gently. "She died of sunstroke out in Santa Rosa."

"Ay, to be sure! How sad for you, my dear. I remember now, they said so," remarked the old doctor vaguely; and again he peered from one to the other, then back once more went his dim old eyes to Aunt Betty. She, however, remained unmoved—cold, unbending, inaccessible as it were—her shapely white arms and slender many-ringed hands crossed lightly behind her as she stood.

"Well, well," quoth the old gentleman almost querulously, blinking at her through his dandy *pince-nez*, "you may be Elizabeth Dawson, madam, for aught I know to the contrary; an Elizabeth Dawson, mind you; but you are not—I say emphatically that you are *not*—my esteemed friend and neighbour of The Granary, the Elizabeth Dawson I knew here so well eighteen years ago. Why! many's the rubber we have had together—she and I—bless you! here in this old farmhouse, before it was altered—made so fine, and utterly spoilt in my opinion—and also at my own place in Maydew. Dearly did Betty Dawson love her rubber at cribbage, and many's the half-crown she has had in the old days out of my pocket at the game. Ha, ha, ha!—he, he, he!" cackled the old man in senile fashion, rattling his false teeth together like castanets. "Fifteen two, fifteen four, fifteen six, and a pair's eight! Sometimes a whole flush o' five in crib—ha, ha, ha!—and often two for his heels. 'He, he, he!'"

"One for his nob at the present moment wouldn't be amiss," put in Colin, *sotto voce*.

"No, no," squeaked the old gentleman, ramming his stick athwart by way of emphasis, and wobbling perilously above it, as he continued, "I am not to be hoodwinked in this brazen manner! Why, Heaven bless my soul alive! madam, my good old friend—the Elizabeth Dawson I knew—had a *flat nose and wore caps!*"

Aunt Betty looked straight at him with a chill proud smile, not perhaps untinged with disdain, "Time changes most of us," she said critically; "and though you may fail to recognise in me the old friend you speak of, I, nevertheless, upon closer examination, now recognise you, sir; remember you perfectly. Altered, aged as you are; as indeed we both are of course, Dr. Gabriel Gaunt, I well discern now that I should have known you anywhere."

The old gentleman gasped, more bewildered than ever, "B—but you are a different woman, mum, altogether," he stammered out at last.

"I say; look here! Ain't you getting just a bit fogged, old chappie?" suggested Colin with scant respect; thinking that it was about time he "shoved in his oar" and assisted his adorable friends in the discomfiting of old Gabriel Gaunt. "Are you quite sure that your memory is as good as you would like us to believe, don't you know?"

The indignant old man turned at once upon the imperturbed young one, whom he fancied that he had seen somewhere or other before, but could not at the moment recollect precisely where, and demanded ferociously who was this young jackanapes who dared thus to interrupt and to insult him—him, Dr. Gabriel Gaunt, who was respected throughout Maydew!

Whereupon Colin made answer in his thin, high, easy tenor:

"Now don't you lose your temper, old boy, and get calling names, because that's a sort o' thing I stand from nobody; so I warn you. Miss Dawson here has only to say the word, and out you go neck and crop, sir!"

"Be quiet, Mr. Chepstowe!" said Aunt Betty severely.

"Dear Miss Dawson, I mean it," said Colin mildly. "You have only to say the word, and I'll chuck him out on the spot with all the pleasure in life, don't you know?"

"Mr. Chepstowe, I really am ashamed of you," said Aunt Betty, with grave reproof. "You! a young man like you! Have you then no reverence for his grey hairs?"

"Yes, if he had any; but he has none, you see," whispered Colin quite innocently, in his turn interrupting Miss Dawson. "A fella' cannot reverence what doesn't exist, can he?"

An answer so flippant was unworthy of a rejoinder. Even had it been otherwise, Miss Dawson just then would have been unable to administer further rebuke to the incorrigible Colin Chepstowe. For the angry old gentleman—now very angry indeed, and pardonably so—had planted himself right before Aunt Betty, upon the carriage drive; and there, with lean old legs apart, and both quivering old hands pressed hard upon the convenient knob of his stick, he prepared to say good-bye, and to shake off the dust of The Granary from his feet.

"Farewell, madam," quavered old Gabriel

Gaunt, mottled and purple about the gills, and spluttering forth his words in his wrath—"farewell! Although I consider that you have treated me ab—ab—abominably, receiving me on the threshold of your dwelling in the worst possible manner, I apologise—yes, I apologise—for what is evidently regarded by you as an unwarrantable intrusion on your privacy. But it shall not occur again, I promise you—oh, no, never again! Please entertain no anxiety on that score! One taste of your hospitality is enough! You have smitten me upon one cheek, so to say; and I offer you, yes, I humbly offer you the other!"

"Thinking to meet once more an esteemed old friend, after the lapse of many years, I called here to-day expressly to pay my respects to her, and to welcome her back loyally to The Granary and Maydew—and what do I find, madam, for my pains?"

"I find, madam, a woman, calling herself Elizabeth Dawson, who allows me to be insulted and ridiculed to my face, and who has the audacity, the flaunting brazenness to try and persuade me that she is the actual sister of Oliver Dawson of The Granary—the Elizabeth Dawson of Santa Rosa Island!"

"Madam, I don't know you. I repeat most emphatically that I don't know you. I neither know nor care who you are—but all the same, I am amazed beyond measure, I am disgusted beyond measure, at the unjustifiable reception I have met with at this old house to-day. Adequate words fail me in which to express my amazement and disgust. If it were not for the circumstance that it is no affair of mine—most assuredly no affair of mine, I admit it, madam—I would spare neither time nor labour in exposing the trickery and deceit—perhaps crime," added the old wretch darkly, "for ought one can tell—which all too plainly at the present moment are being practised here at The Granary. However, as I say, since it is no affair of mine, I gladly turn my back on—"

Elizabeth Dawson, in her haughtiest, queenliest manner, held up her jewelled hand, and cut old Gabriel Gaunt short.

"You are right. Assuredly it is no affair of yours, Dr. Gaunt," she said, answering him in his own words. "I wish you good afternoon."

For a second or two the frenzied old gentleman hesitated. He was charitably desirous at parting to say something yet more withering and spiteful than he had already managed to splutter forth—something indeed that should leave behind it a lasting venomous sting.

He had been mystified, baffled, and snubbed; he could condone neither one process nor the other. His visit of gallantry, to say nothing of the time he had spent in adorning himself for the occasion, was a dead failure; and the failure of it all was galling to his vanity and his self-esteem.

But Colin Chepstowe stepped in timely, and characteristically settled the matter.

"Don't you hear, sir?" said he, with pert authority, sticking in his glass. "Miss Dawson says good afternoon. An excellent example, sir! We all say good afternoon."

It was the last straw, the last indignity.

With something remarkably like a dance and a howl of rage—during which, brief as was the performance, bad words slipped out with alarming distinctness—old Gabriel Gaunt turned and fled; that is, he staggered off upon his unmanageable old legs as fast as they could carry him towards the entrance gates of The Granary.

Half way down the leafy drive he faced round suddenly, shaking his stick in a menacing fashion at the Misses Dawson's house—possibly indeed at that little group of three, standing there by the rhododendrons before the porch and gleefully watching his departure, his theatrical exit; and then the enraged old gentleman tumbled headlong into his low, black, basket-chaise and swore impotently to himself, yet with fierce intent, all the way home to Maydew village.

And the gardener's help swore sullenly at the retreating chaise; because the stingy old gallant within it had given him nothing—not even a threepenny-bit for minding the shaggy pony!

It was in this fashion that the Misses Dawson were bold enough to throw down the gauntlet to

the enemy. Would good or ill be the outcome of the challenge?

Not without latent anxiety did Aunt Betty wonder; though so far she had come off the victor.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A MYSTERIOUS PHOTOGRAPH.

WHEN Dr. Gabriel Gaunt was fairly out of sight Susy ran straight into the porch, sat down helplessly upon the broad oaken bench of it, and there laughed until she cried.

"Oh, it was too bad, too droll, dear!" said she to Aunt Betty—"the poor bewildered angry old man! What will he go and say in Maydew I wonder?"

"Pooh!" cried Elizabeth Dawson, airily; "it matters not. Maydew people are nothing to us, Susy."

Nevertheless, airy as were her manner and her tone, Aunt Betty felt really thankful that a highly unpleasant and threatening interview had been got over so expeditiously and with no worse result.

"There is one comfort," said she; "he is not likely to trouble us again, dear."

"He would be an extraordinarily pertinacious old gentleman if he did, darling," Susy said, wiping away the merry tears.

"It is my belief," here put in the Honourable Colin, seriously, "that the old fool is cracked, don't you know—simply cracked, dear Miss Dawson. It was impossible for a sensible fella' to make out what he was driving at. How else could he go skipping around such a wretched object and talking the infernal wubbish he did?"

Miss Dawson's nimble wits seized upon the notion forthwith. Colin Chepstowe, after what he had just heard and witnessed, would require a little judicious handling.

"Not in his proper mind—a trifle cracked, as you call it?" exclaimed she, brightly. "I verily believe that you are right, Mr. Chepstowe! As you say, he is a ridiculous spectacle, and his people ought to lock him up. But I assure you his poor clouded old memory," went on Aunt Betty, with apparent frankness, "is, in some respects, not altogether at fault; for you must know, Mr. Chepstowe, that years and years ago we *did* visit, and in return receive here, the better class of Maydew folk. But they were always very stupid and slow—weren't they, Susy dear?"

Susy, conscious as it were of uncertain ground, at first restricted herself to an acquiescent nod.

"As far as I can remember," she added, cautiously, a moment later.

"And so after all these years, during which so much has happened all round, as one may say," ran on Miss Dawson, lightly, "where is the use of cultivating, or rather of renewing, the acquaintance of people for whom, even in the old days, one never really cared a straw? You see, Mr. Chepstowe, if we were once to encourage here the Gabriel Gaunt faction, we should inevitably get mixed up with the whole gang."

And with this sentiment Aunt Betty performed a clever little shudder.

"By Jove," said Colin, sympathetically, "that, truly, would be something *awful*."

"Therefore it was by far the better plan, when the opportunity came, *vous savez*, to lose no time in sending old Gabriel Gaunt and his set to the rightabout," declared Aunt Betty, gaily.

"And I think you did it splendidly, too, dear Miss Dawson," said Colin, admiringly. "It was as good as a comedy to watch the old fella's face—it was, by Jove!"

"Your help in the matter was by no means to be despised," said Miss Dawson, archly. "Indeed, I am inclined to believe that the speedy defeat of our foe was in a great measure owing to your kind championship, your unquestionable ability in attack, Mr. Chepstowe. Had Susy and I been surprised alone and undefended, we should probably have come out of it all not half so well. Nay—who knows?—but for you we might have been routed ourselves!"

Of course young Colin was more than delighted at these honeyed words of flattery and praise,

and protested all sorts of impossible things; and then Aunt Betty, with Susy's arm linked lovingly within her own, took Colin Chepstowe everywhere and showed him everything; and finally she completed her subjugation—if that indeed were not already done—by asking him to remain with them at The Granary for dinner.

The young man's gratitude was of the speechless order; he seized her fair hand and kissed it.

At dessert, when the wide latticed windows were open to the lovely August twilight, and many wax candles in silver branches illuminated the dim old oak-walled dining-room at The Granary, Miss Dawson said easily to young Colin, as if the idea had only that instant occurred to her,—

"By the by, Mr. Chepstowe, it is hardly worth while for you to mention Dr. Gaunt's ridiculous visit here, don't you know? People are such a gossiping lot in this place, I am given to understand—in fact they were always so in the old days—and possess amongst them all the not uncommon faculty of manufacturing mountains out of the tiniest of molehills. You understand what I mean, do you not, my friend?"—this very winningly.

"I see. You mean, better say nothing at all about it to my mother and her chums; eh?" lisped Colin, pleasantly.

This was precisely what Miss Dawson did mean—her quick thoughts running on Lady Winterbourne, the Countess of Bearwarden, and others of the Winterbourne set, whose curiosity once fired would be a dangerous thing to brave. But she said carelessly,—

"Oh, I wasn't thinking exactly of Lady Winterbourne, Mr. Chepstowe. I meant anybody."

She looked very beautiful with a damask rose from the garden in her grey hair, and another at her bosom, and with the candle-light falling upon her fair throat and arms and all about the soft white evening gown she wore.

Colin, gazing at her with the most open admiration, as a matter of course promised just whatever was required of him.

In spite of his many follies, his idle, aimless life, the lad at core was an honest gentleman—for his entire allegiance was won, and he would be loyal to his simple word.

It did not strike him at the time, though it did so afterwards—in reality several little matters touching the *ménage* at The Granary were on after reflection far from lucid to Colin Chepstowe—that old Gabriel Gaunt's long tongue had stirred up malice would in all likelihood be the means of spreading the story of his own discomfiture throughout the length and breadth of the county.

However, between the *coterie* of worthy Westshire folk whom Lady Winterbourne knew, and the set—equally worthy in their way—whom the Gabriel Gaunts of Maydew knew, there was a great gulf fixed. And so for the present, at any rate, Elizabeth Dawson had little fear. And by-and-by it would not matter, said Aunt Betty confidently to herself—nothing would matter, she hoped, by and by, when her *finesse* and diplomacy should have conquered all difficulties.

On the next day Lady Winterbourne herself drove over from the Chase and called at The Granary; and was very friendly, nay affectionate even, and made much of the two Misses Dawson.

Colin, on this occasion accompanied his mother in the carriage, and did little else save stare with his whole soul at Aunt Betty so long as the visit lasted.

Miss Dawson and Susy promised to dine *en famille* at Winterbourne Chase on the following evening. For since old Gabriel Gaunt had attacked their privacy they resolved to shut themselves up no longer. They would go out and about, hither and thither, and show themselves fearlessly to all in the parish and beyond it who might wish to gaze at them.

"She is really a charming creature," Lady Winterbourne sighed, as they drove homeward, "and I should say had been good-looking in her time. But oh! Colin dear, I am sadly afraid she is too old for you. She must be fifty, Colin, perhaps more, if she's a day—though she is admirably preserved, and irreproachably

gowned always, I grant you. Colin darling, you cannot marry an old woman!"

"If she's an old woman, why, I adore old women—that's all," said Colin, dreamily, lying back upon the olive-green padding of the carriage, and gazing upward, glass in eye, at a tiny brown lark "running," as Shelley says, in the sky.

"Her half million, or a quarter, whichever it rightly is, would of course do wonders for Winterbourne," mused her ladyship aloud, "when your father's gone."

Lady Winterbourne could always speak with the greatest ease and equanimity of the earthly departure of her liege lord; for he had been a far from faithful liege lord to her. But there was one human being in the whole world whom she did love dearly: and that one was the only child of her loveless marriage—the Honourable Colin Chepstowe, the future Lord Winterbourne, of Winterbourne Chase.

Winterbourne was frightfully mortgaged in every direction; that she knew; and—and—ah! was it not a thousand pities that Colin should have failed to take a fancy to Miss Dawson's pretty niece, fixing his affections instead on the fascinating middle-aged Miss Dawson herself? Oh the blind perversity of men!

"But, Colin dear, there's the younger one, you know," continued his mother, timidly. "Couldn't you try—couldn't you try—try and see whether—eh?"

So her sentence ended lamely.

"I wouldn't cut out Lowater, even if I could; if you mean that, *mater*," said Colin, simply.

"The dear old boy is coming next week—you forget."

"No; I don't forget." And Lady Winterbourne sighed again, and they drove home to the Chase in silence.

Never a day passed now without Colin's coming over to The Granary. The most transparent of excuses served to start him off in the direction of Maydew village. He drove with the Misses Dawson; he rode with them; he played tennis with them in the level thymy paddock; he sat with them in the safe old punt upon the fishpond, and tried to catch the huge old pike that dozed below the broad flat lily leaves; and it seemed to lookers-on, such as the household servants, our domestic spies and judges, that the Honourable Colin Chepstowe was always dining at The Granary.

Ah, those dinners, in the fragrant late summer twilight!—the most informal, cozy, delightful dinners imaginable! Young Colin never forgot them as long as he lived.

"A man may not marry his grandmother," quoted the butler, waggishly; and thus set the table, the housekeeper's supper-table in a roar.

One afternoon Colin came, by appointment, to ride with the two Misses Dawson. He was in high spirits, for Lord Lowater was due at the Chase on the morrow, and Colin meant to remind Susy of the fact.

When he dismounted at the porch he was told that Miss Dawson and Miss Susy were putting on their habits; but the footman was desired to say that the ladies would not be five minutes—would Mr. Chepstowe in the meantime walk into the drawing-room?

Colin, humming softly and happily to himself, strolled in. Between the drawing room at The Granary and the drawing-room at the house in Park-lane there was in every wise a marked difference. The one was a lovely, dim, old-world apartment suggestive of powder, patches, and farthing-gale and redolent of *pot-pouri* and big china bowls full of roses. The other, in a suite, made a splendid chamber, a typical reception-place of modern wealth and fashion. Things which would have appeared queerly out of place, perhaps, in one house seemed to be quite the fitting and natural garniture in the other; and so contrariwise. However, inquisitive Colin had found plenty of interesting and various objects littered about at The Granary that he never remembered to have seen in the magnificent rooms in Park-lane.

Susy, with habit-tail over her arm, running downstairs first, discovered the young man in possession of an ancient album; a large cumbersome volume with lids of sandal wood and clasps

of solid, figured silver—a product of Santa Rosa Island.

"Oh, do first look here a moment, dear Miss Susy," cried he gleefully, "and tell me who is this funny old party? I say, what a jolly old ark of curiosities it is!—family curiosities of a bygone age, I s'pose? I never noticed it before."

Susy near him, at his elbow, but not paying much heed to him, was carefully buttoning her gauntlet. She merely glanced over the open page of the photograph album, recognised the particular photograph in question indicated by Colin's finger, and said thoughtlessly,—

"Oh, that is Aunt Betty!"

Colin stared hard at the picture under his nose, as well he might.

"What?" said he, when he did speak. Instantly, then, Susy Dawson was conscious of the awful blunder she had committed. First she grew red and hot; then she turned white and cold.

"I mean—I mean," she stammered, giving utterance to the first lame falsehood she could hit upon in her confusion—"it is—it is an old friend of Aunt Betty's; a—a—oh, what am I telling you; I am talking nonsense, I believe! I mean that we knew her—the original of that photograph—out in Santa Rosa."

"Oh, I see," said Colin Chepstowe, slowly, much puzzled nevertheless, the massive open volume still held close to his pink near-sighted eyes.

Just then Aunt Betty herself entered, and Susy moved swiftly towards her over the shining black floor, stopping Miss Dawson upon the threshold of the room.

"How could we have been so careless!" she whispered, in little nervous gasps. "It never should have been left about—never, at any time. It is simply bristling with evidence against us, and—and we ought to have remembered, dear!"

"My dear Susy, are you gone suddenly crazy?" said Aunt Betty, very low.

"Hush! He has got hold of our old Island album—he has been looking at the photographs!" And, as coherently as she could, Susy in a few rapid sentences explained to Aunt Betty precisely what had happened—what Colin himself had said, and what she had said, concerning "the funny old party" in the sandal-wood album.

"Take it away from him directly—smooth over the matter better than I have been able to do—and hide it away and lock it up as soon as ever you can, darling, before further mischief is committed," counselled Susy feverishly. "What a donkey I was, to be sure!"

Miss Dawson, keenly alive then to the quicksands of the situation, explained away the blunder with admirable tact, with her usual *savoir faire*. She led on the talk adroitly to the coming of Viscount Lowater—they would see him, she hoped graciously, frequently with Colin at The Granary—it would be so pleasant to meet Lord Lowater again, like old times in town, etc, etc. And volatile Colin, listening to her and adoring her, soon forgot all about the puzzling photograph.

He spent a very happy time with them, and dined as usual at The Granary.

Riding slowly homeward to Winterbourne Chase, when a ghostly white moon sailed high above the woods and wheatfields, the rich amber stocks now silver-flecked and whispering together in the cool midnight breeze, and the corncrake was calling harshly in the dewy aftermath, Colin suddenly remembered the photograph again—every line, feature, and peculiarity of that remarkable production.

"By Jove," he said aloud, "it is rum, though!"

He was thinking of what old Gabriel Gaunt had said about the Elizabeth Dawson who, eighteen years ago, had gone out to Santa Rosa Island.

"My old friend, the Elizabeth Dawson I knew, had a flat nose and wore caps."

The antiquated photograph in the sandal-wood album had a flat nose and wore a cap!

It was very odd.

Were there, then, two Elizabeth Dawsons, two Aunt Bettys; the one who had gone out to

Santa Rosa, and the one who had returned to England and The Granary?

Yet whatever might be the mystery of it all, if mystery indeed there were, young Colin determined to be discreet with his own people—discreet in the matter even with Lowater. He would be loyal to the Aunt Betty whom he knew—loyal to his Aunt Betty, as he mentally called her—he had given her his word.

"For I love her—I love her—I love her!" he cried aloud to the high white chill-smiling moon, "the inconstant moon." "I began in fun, for the mere joke of the thing; but, on my soul, I have ended in earnest! Old as she is, I would die to win her. Heaven hear me, I would!"

He had dined well that night, and had drunk a fair allowance of good wine, and he thoroughly believed in the reality of his passion. Yes; he was in downright solemn earnest, he told himself over and over again; and as sure as his own name was Colin Chepstowe, he meant to win Aunt Betty for his own!

She should be the future Lady Winterbourne of Winterbourne Chase. He would make her his wife.

And when next the young man appeared at The Granary, lo! the sandal-wood album was gone.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

"HE COMETH NOT," SHE SAID.

As Miss Dawson had predicted, Dr. Gabriel Gaunt did not a second time obtrude himself and his troublesome memory upon her and her niece at The Granary.

It is true that he went about saying everywhere that there was a mystery at the erstwhile farmhouse; that there was an audacious woman living there who called herself Elizabeth Dawson, but who, in reality, was no more Betty Dawson, the spinster sister of his dead friend Oliver of that name, than she was the man in the moon!

That he—Dr. Gabriel Gaunt himself—would, if necessary, swear to.

But nobody, as it happened, wanted him to do anything of the kind. For every one knew that Gabriel Gaunt senior was a garrulous misty-minded old fop, far advanced in his second childhood, and a terrible bore—who was considered only fit to dress up his poor corkscrew-like old body in a juvenile and ridiculous manner, and occasionally visit the workhouse patients.

So nobody paid any serious heed to the half-crazy old dandy, whom time seemed never to have forgotten but death to have passed by.

If any one chanced to mention the two Misses Dawson and The Granary in the hearing of Dr. Gabriel Gaunt, the old gentleman broke out immediately into shrill abuse of them, and called them "a couple of adventuresses," and occasionally something worse; and with such small spitting of venom he was obliged to remain content—at all events for the present.

But he said to himself darkly that a time would come, and then—well, then this false Elizabeth Dawson would see!

One thing, however, was now perfectly clear to the "resident gentry" of Maydew—they were not wanted at The Granary, and so they prudently kept away.

The first week in September arrived; but, for aught Elizabeth Dawson and her niece knew, no Rudolf de Vere and Douglas Rex had arrived with it at Monkshood Hall.

Birds had come over from Rathdonnell regularly enough; but never a letter, never once the most insignificant note, from the master of that Irish shooting-lodge. And Elizabeth Dawson had wondered much that he did not write to her—she could not help wondering. For they were no ordinary friends—it never had been no ordinary friendship, she told herself—from the first.

Secretly feeling this so thoroughly, at the same time she therefore felt that Rudolf's silence was both cold and unkind. Yet not for worlds would Miss Dawson have acknowledged this openly. She shrank indeed from speaking of it, even with Susy.

Very delicately she scolded Colin Chepstowe, as to his knowledge of the old hall at Monkshood,

and what was going on there. But he could tell her nothing beyond what she already knew, namely, that Rudolf de Vere and three or four bachelor sportsmen were expected at Monkshood for the shooting in September.

So an under-keeper, on the prowl for stoats, had told the Honourable Colin, it appeared, a few days ago, young Colin having met the man in the neighbourhood of the Monkshood preserves.

At this period of her life, like many another spinster of uncertain age, Elizabeth Dawson kept a diary for her own eye alone.

Years afterwards, on looking over her journal, she read that it was on a Wednesday afternoon, about 4.30, at the beginning of September, 188—, that the old joy and the old sweetness in life—and how dear, how sweet, how joyful a reality is life, when things go well with us—awoke for her once more!

Though her heart had indeed at times ached very sorely of late, nobody would have guessed the fact from Aunt Betty's exterior. Colin Chepstowe, who watched her unceasingly, with the jealous eye of a doubting lover, said over and over again to himself that she was the most charming woman in the world—the loveliest also, and the gayest of the gay.

There were times, too, when Young Colin himself seemed suddenly to have grown at once curiously quiet and diffident; when he chatted a good deal less than was his wont and sighed often and deeply particularly when Aunt Betty was near him.

The truth of the matter was, he was awaiting his opportunity; was contemplating the business of, plucking up courage for, a very serious plunge; and surely matrimony is as a terrific dive from certainty to uncertainty. When a man is but two-and-twenty and a woman—oh, think of it!—will never see her fortieth, perhaps fiftieth, birthday again. But Love was ever a wag!

And so it happened that on a Wednesday afternoon in early September a smart turn-out of the dog-cart pattern bowled swiftly up to the porch of The Granary.

A man-servant was looking out of one of the musk-embowered diamond-casements in the hall, "Why, here's some more of 'em," he muttered to himself. "How many more besides, I wonder?"

He was the same individual who had admitted the Honourable Colin Chepstowe on the occasion of the young man's first call at the Misses Dawson's country house.

Two gentlemen now alighted from the dog-cart, and the footman showed himself speedily at the open inner doors of the hall. These, likewise, were new visitors to the man, he never having seen either of them before.

"Is Miss Dawson at home?" inquired the taller of the two strangers.

Norris in reply said that Miss Dawson and Miss Susy were both at home—they were playing lawn tennis in the paddock. There were a good many visitors at the house that afternoon—Lady Winterbourne, the Countess of Bearwarden, Lord Lowater, and several others. Should Norris go and inform Miss Dawson of the gentlemen's arrival; and what names should he give; or would the gentlemen prefer to join the party straightway upon the tennis-ground?

The new visitors, after slight hesitation, decided that they would join the Misses Dawson and their guests on the tennis-ground; and, knowing the way to it, they strolled round together to the level thymy paddock, to present themselves unannounced.

Though September had come with stubble, turnip-fields and partridges, the phenomenal summer of that year showed as yet no serious sign of breaking; and though the days were necessarily shorter, they were still gloriously beautiful, especially the "lazy amber afternoons," which sometimes, however, to Aunt Betty, seemed strangely quiet and melancholy when the sun began to sink redly behind the misty woods.

On the previous evening the Misses Dawson had dined at Winterbourne Chase, and had met the large house-party now assembled there.

Most of the men were shooters; but some were not; and Miss Dawson had proposed to Lady Winterbourne that those of her party who

did not care for stubble and turnip-field, luncheon at the covert-side, or the burthen of a heavy hot gun under a baking sky, should all of them come over to The Granary on the next day for a sort of impromptu garden-party.

The idea had been received with acclaim all round; and the consequence was that, with the exception of Lord Winterbourne himself, the Earl of Bearwarden and a few other dogged and hoary sportsmen like themselves, every one, male and female, of the Winterbourne Chase guests was to be found that afternoon in the lovely old grounds of The Granary; which seemed made expressly, said the fat, good-humoured Countess of Bearwarden, unblushingly tinted and powdered as usual, for life out of doors and lotus-eating generally.

Some of them had arrived on horseback; some on wheels; some even, by stress of circumstances, had come in open flies hired for the occasion from "The Wheatsheaf" in Maydew.

Champagne-cup and claret-cup; an abundance of fruit and an amplitude of other light comestibles. All these were conspicuously to the fore in the delightfully shady paddock; whilst sounds of commingled mirth and alarm came fitfully from the neighbourhood of the fish-pond hard by, where two brave knights and three timid damsels were voyaging among the water-lilies in the safe old punt.

Tennis enthusiasts, in several sets, were hard at work in their well-known style—gay in attire, vigorous, active, bending and leaping with many a wild rush over the velvet sward—a joyous sight always to the healthy eye.

The Countess of Bearwarden had been eating nectarines and vanilla wafers; these she had topped with ices and black coffee; feeling much refreshed, and having a fine digestion, her thoughts were now straying pleasantly towards chicken sandwiches and champagne-cup. There were also other epicurean possibilities before the hour of departure; and in the cool of the evening the drive back to the Chase would restore her appetite for dinner.

At the present moment, however, the handsome fat Countess was talking eagerly to Elizabeth Dawson, as the two sat together within the shadow of the gently stirring elms, which were as yet untouched by the sere and yellow leaf.

The Countess, indeed, was doing her persuasive best to obtain a certain promise from Aunt Betty; namely, that Miss Dawson and her charming niece would both of them spend Christmas at Lowater Castle, and so make their dear gushing faithful friend the Countess more happy than words could express.

But Miss Dawson would bind herself to no social arrangement touching a future so far ahead. She said sweetly, and with her adorable smile, that of course both she and Susy would really be charmed to visit Lowater Castle some day or other; but she added, gravely, that all kinds of things, agreeable and disagreeable, might happen before Christmas came round again, putting an end to all preconceived plans.

"No, dear Lady Bearwarden, believe me, it never is wise to date one's pleasures so far ahead. Mischance and disappointment invariably ensue, and then—"

The trite civil words here died upon Aunt Betty's lips. Speaking, she had lifted her eyes by chance, and there, not a dozen yards removed from where she was sitting with Lady Bearwarden, she beheld Susy, with racket thrown aside, and a beautiful welcoming blush suffusing either cheek, shaking hands joyfully with Douglas Rex, who looked tougher, stouter, browner than of yore—vastly improved altogether, indeed, from his month's sojourn in bracing moorland air.

Near to them stood Lord Lowater, supporting his chin upon his racket and scowling at bearded Douglas.

In the very next moment, a dear, familiar voice, pleasant, gentle, and easy as aforetime, was saying close to Aunt Betty,—

"How do you do, Miss Dawson? You seem quite to have 'shaken down,' I am glad to discern, in this charming, old-new home of yours. I trust you have found no crumpled rose-leaf—I hope sincerely that you are happy in it!"

(To be continued.)

## OLGA'S AFFLICTION.

—:O:—  
CHAPTER I.

"HAVE you seen her?"

"Seen whom?"

"Olga Bretherton."

"No. Who is she?"

"Is it possible that you don't know? Why, the new governess that Grace has engaged for Mona and Eric. Isn't it the most romantic name you ever heard? Olga Bretherton. She arrived by the three-o'clock train, and my curiosity has been at fever heat ever since."

"Then you did not see her, either?"

"Not her face. I saw her as she stepped from the carriage and went upstairs, and I have never seen a more stylish girl. Her form is exquisite, though tiny and dainty, and her hair is the most bewitching shade of gold you ever saw. Oh! I have got a romance all planned for Olga Bretherton. Shall I outline it to you?"

May Duncan laughed merrily.

The two girls were sitting upon the shaded end of a balcony at a charming summer resort near the sea. Before them stretched as handsome a lawn and as white a sanded beach as any sea-side place can boast, though down a little way, plainly visible from where they sat, the rocks rose in craggy cliffs, making the coast one of indescribable beauty and fascination.

It was a fashionable place, too, where only families of wealth could afford to remain, but the air that surrounded the two girls upon the balcony gave unmistakable evidence that they were of that same class—old and wealthy families.

"You are so full of vivid imagination, Agnes, that I wonder you don't write novels," said May Duncan, while the laugh still lingered upon her lips.

"I should if I were not too lazy!" exclaimed Miss French, leaning her pretty head back indolently against the great balcony chair. "If ever a financial misfortune should befall me, I should enter the quill trade, and try my hand at making love on paper."

"You are so successful at it in other ways that I don't doubt that there are plenty of publishers to be found who would pay for your work. But we are wandering from the subject of Olga Bretherton. It is absurd, of course, but somehow some of your fanciful notions seem to have got into my head and fascinated me. Tell me of her."

"You know as much as I do of her, *chérie*. She has come to look after Mona and Eric while their butterfly mamma amuses her whimsical self in every way that a married flirt can devise. Don't understand me to be guilty of any such heresy as intending to disparage Grace! On the contrary, I think her charming. She is the only woman I know or ever saw capable of holding her husband through the attentions of other men. I have been taking lessons. But again we wander from the subject. Grace told me that she had engaged Olga Bretherton—somehow I don't seem to be able to separate those two names—and immediately there floated through my mind visions of a pretty creature, slight, dainty, blonde, and blue-eyed, with any number of romances attached to her—all of my own creating, of course—and here she turns up exactly as I had planned her—slightness, daintiness, blondness and all, even to the blue eyes, I'll wager, though I have not seen them yet!"

"And the romance?"

"Oh, I shall do the angel maiden's part in the story and be exceedingly kind to her. I shall stop to speak to her on the piazza; I shall say a kind word to her on the sands occasionally; and once in a while I shall go to walk with her and the children. Then I shall take occasion to introduce—let me see, which one of them can I spare best?—oh, I shall take occasion to introduce Claud Garston. He is no end rich, not over bright, and beauty-crazy. He shall fall in love with her, shake me, and our pretty governess shall immediately blossom into a society leader, and we will attend her dances next winter, as if

she had been in the swim for the whole of her natural life. Isn't it pretty?"

"Very, if you can carry it out."

"If I can! My dear May, there are never any 'ifs' with me. I rule by the strength of my will. I tell you that by the end of the season Olga Bretherton shall be Olga Garston, and—and I don't think I like the combination, after all. Do you? The names don't seem to fit together."

"How incorrigible you are, Agnes!" exclaimed Miss Duncan, with another merry laugh.

"Not at all. I think names should correspond the same as the materials of a gown, in order to make an artistic combination. For instance: suppose I should marry a man named Smith. How would Agnes Smith sound? Ugh! But, I say, there comes Mona. I don't like her, usually. She is too forward. But we can't afford to lose the opportunity. Mona! Mona! Come here, darling. I want to talk to you."

The child turned in her direction, walking more sedately than usual. There was nothing of the spring of childhood in her gait, and in looking into the thoughtful face, one would have suggested that it was too old for a girl of eight years. Her eyes, on this occasion, were large and serious, and as she approached Miss French in that unusually sedate manner, the girl cried out:

"You haven't seen a ghost, have you? What boggy has frightened you, little one? Come; sit down here on the arm of my chair, and tell me all about it."

She slipped her arm about the child's waist, and drew her down into the chair; but the seriousness of the little face did not relax. The voice quivered, however, and there was a suggestion of tears in it, as she answered:

"I can't."

"Why not? Don't you like your new governess?"

The little lip quivered ominously.

"No," she answered, hesitatingly.

"Why, Mona!" reprovingly, "Why not, little one?"

"Because I don't!" exclaimed the child, sobbing in reality.

"But that is not a reason. You must have something better than that for not liking a person. Come, tell me. Hasn't she nice manners?"

"Yes—no—I don't know."

"Isn't she pretty?"

The child looked at her interlocutor with a sort of stony horror in her eyes.

"Pretty!" she gasped. "Oh, my goodness! She is the most awful thing you ever saw in all your life! I shall never go to sleep as long as I live, if mamma keeps her here. I had rather died than have her! Oh, it is awful—awful! I shall dream of her every night, as I used to dream of the snakes, after I saw the girl with them around her neck. Oh, I shall die, if mamma lets her stay!"

There was a passion in the utterances of the little creature that made its impression upon Agnes French, and her brow grew together in little lines.

"Why, Mona," she said, earnestly, "she looked very pretty to me as she left the carriage, and went upstairs. Hasn't she beautiful golden hair?"

"Ye-s."

"And isn't she slight and delicate, like that great dolly that Uncle Paul gave you?"

"Ye-s."

"And hasn't she lovely big blue eyes, just the colour of porcelain?"

"Ye-s."

"Why, then, you wretched child, what more can you ask? What is there that does not please your royal highness?"

"It's the rest!"

"What rest?"

The child shivered.

"That awful scar!" she said almost in a whisper. "It is the very awfulest thing you ever saw in all your life. Oh, I shall never, never, never go to sleep as long as I live, if mamma lets her stay!"

The child's words were not loud, but there was a certain penetration in them that gave them a distinct carrying power. Miss French seemed suddenly to shrink from her. The pretty laugh-

ing face was very serious as she glanced up, attracted by some inexplicable fascination, and there, standing in one of the great windows that opened upon the balcony, was the subject of their conversation. She started slightly, and a little quickly suppressed exclamation escaped her.

She knew that it was Olga Bretherton from the description Mona had given. There was the exquisite hair that she had seen, the singularly well-rounded and perfect form, the graceful contour and porcelain blue eyes; but about the jaw and down upon the throat there was a great crimson splash that extended well upon the cheek, destroying all hope of concealment.

Miss French gazed upon the singular face as if fascinated—fascinated with horror.

Olga Bretherton's expression did not alter. She stood there for a moment, and then turned slowly and went in.

But Agnes French knew that she had heard, and the unconscious cruelty of the childish words came back to her.

"I shall never, never, never go to sleep as long as I live, if mamma lets her stay!"

## CHAPTER II.

OLGA BRETHERTON walked back into the drawing-room, across the room, and approached the opposite balcony, where she stopped, looking quietly from the window.

No one would have guessed, from gazing into that calm countenance, the war of rebellion that was taking place in her struggling soul. She had heard Mona Glyndon's words with cruel distinctness, and she had seen the expression of horror that darkened Agnes French's eyes as she gazed upon that awful scar. It was always the way; every one did the same. She had heard the murmurs of admiration that had followed her everywhere she appeared until a glimpse of her face was caught, and then—

Can you not understand how it had grown to be a tragedy in her heart? Can you not understand how the very sight of herself was hateful to her, until it seemed to her that death was the only relief that ever could be promised to her?

No one had ever asked her how it came to be there; and if they had, it is doubtful if she would have replied. But it turned her beauty to gall and wormwood. She hated the blonde hair and the youthful, beautiful carriage that attracted attention to her, and she had grown morose, even sullen. The beautiful lightness of her disposition that had once been the sweetest charm that ever characterized a girl, had gone from her, and she had grown to loathe her sex because they turned from her with a shiver, to detest men because they looked at her with pitying glances, and to abhor children because they remarked aloud, with unconscious cruelty, upon her appearance, and stared at her as if it were well-nigh impossible to remove their gaze.

At first she struggled against it passionately, and would cry out in her soul:

"What is life worth to me! I am nothing but a freak, and a side-show or exhibition, is the only place that is open to me. Oh, heaven, take pity upon me and let me die!"

But she did not die, and the curse continued upon her.

I do not think that any of you can understand what life was to her. You who are lame, you who are blind, you who are deaf or dumb, receive the sweetest of all the God-like attributes in mankind, sympathy; but there seemed to be no sympathy for Olga Bretherton. It was horror. It was with a shiver of repulsion that people looked upon her; and that great, fiery scar had burned its way into her very soul, leaving there an open wound for which there seemed no balm on earth or in heaven.

But the time had come when she must do something for her own support and that of the mother who was dependent upon her, and she had yielded to an impulse—unconsidered, but only realizing the necessity of the occasion—and had come in answer to a desire of Grace Glyndon's to take care of her little children.

But she had heard Mona's words, and as she

stood staring from the window of that great hotel, a sudden resolution had been formed. She turned away deliberately, calmly, and went up to Mrs. Glyndon's room. In answer to an invitation, she opened the door and entered.

The little shiver that passed over the small, brown-haired butterfly was not lost upon her as she stood there. It sent a pang through her heart, but there was not a trace of it in her calm countenance as she went forward and leaned gracefully against a table, with her beautiful eyes fixed upon Mrs. Glyndon's face.

"I have come to say a very curious thing to you, madame," she said, quietly, "but one which I do not think will disappoint you. When I accepted the terms you offered to come to you to take charge of your little ones, I did not know that you were at a fashionable watering-place. I thought it was a quiet country-place. I am going to ask you to let me go home, and at once. I believe that you will not care when you know that my—my misfortune is already making me the subject for gossip of the entire hotel—a fact which I am sure will be as unpleasant for you as it is for me. Mrs. Glyndon, have I your permission to take the next train for home?"

Grace Glyndon was not entirely without heart, and a slow flush suffused her cheeks.

"My dear Miss Bretherton," she stammered, "I am very sorry."

"May I go?" asked Olga, quietly.

"Why, certainly; I would not keep you against your desire. I greatly regret that I did not tell you the character of the place, and I realize that the fault is entirely mine. Will you forgive me, Miss Bretherton, that I have subjected you to this embarrassment?"

The girl's lip quivered, but her voice was as calm as before, when she replied:

"It is not your fault that I am a—freak."

"Don't say that."

Olga smiled coldly.

"I am not afraid of the truth. Good-bye, Mrs. Glyndon. I am very grateful to you for allowing me to go."

She bowed and left the room.

Half an hour afterward Agnes French and May Duncan saw her, heavily veiled, step into a carriage and drive away.

"The words of that little beast of a child have caused this!" exclaimed Agnes, half angrily.

"It is much better so," answered May. "Would you have your heroine remain to be shunned or stared at by the entire hotel? It would have been worse than martyrdom for her."

"Perhaps you are right. There is so little of the milk of human kindness left in this beastly world. I don't think I ever felt so sorry for any one in all my life as I do for that girl. It is horrible! I wish I had had a chance to say just one little word of sympathy to her."

"You are not nearly so without heart as most persons imagine, after all, little Mistress Flirt!" exclaimed Miss Duncan. "I think it would surprise a great many people, Agnes, if they knew you as you really are."

"Pooh! They would call me a fool then, instead of Mistress Flirt!"

She turned away with a little cynical shrug of the shoulders, and watched the smoke from the locomotive as it pulled out of the station less than a quarter of a mile away.

She knew that Olga Bretherton was in that train, and she thought she could understand something of what the girl must be suffering. But she would have been a trifle puzzled if she could have seen the white, set face looking from the window with the veil still drawn closely over it. There was not even a movement of the gloved hands as they rested in the lap, clasped together. She neither moved nor stirred, but sat there hour after hour while the train moved onward, unconscious of the lovely picture she was making with that hideous scar concealed.

But there were two men upon the other side of the carriage who were not so lost to all interest as she appeared.

"By Jove! there is a pretty girl!" one of them exclaimed. "She is the daintiest, airiest, sweetest creature that I have seen in many days."

"Tell me of her," said his companion. "There

is nothing that is so exquisite to me as the combination of youth and beauty."

"Well, let me see. She is small and fair. Her hair is like spun silk in pale yellow, and as curly as that of a child. She is dressed in a light gray gown which, while not of an expensive material, is beautifully fashioned and fits her to perfection. Her form is grace itself. I never saw a daintier thing than she appears as she sits there."

"But you have said nothing of her face."

"I can only see her profile, and that is veiled; but through the veil I can just discern that it is strikingly beautiful."

The other sighed.

"It always makes me feel my affliction more when a beautiful girl is near me than at any other time," he said, simply.

"Ah, but you'll get over it some day. Old Selby is no end a good doctor, and he will restore your sight, never fear. He told me yesterday that these few weeks in the country will build you up wonderfully, he thinks, and get you in shape to stand the operation in the autumn, and then—presto!—you will be able to admire the pretty girl opposite as well as I."

"You are a comforting fellow at all events. I wish you were going with me. It will be horribly lonesome in the country all alone—doubly alone, since I am without my eyes as well as companionship."

"You ought to have brought a valet."

"And have given him my society for his trouble? My dear fellow, it will require every penny that I can save during this quiet summer to pay old Selby."

"Confound it! If only Uncle Dacre would—"

"Nonsense, Morgan! You are always swearing at chance because poor old Uncle Dacre won't die. I confess that he is not of much use to any one in the world, and that he would be infinitely more interesting dead than alive; but then, he has a right to his life and his money as well, so—"

"By Jove!" interrupted the man addressed as Morgan, "here is your station."

"Already?"

"Yes. It looks a pretty enough place, too. Well, old man, I leave you here. If you should want me for anything, just write or telegraph, and I will run up. Perhaps I shall, anyway, for a few days, a little later on."

"I won't ask you to, for fear it would be a bore, but you know how glad I should be."

"You may expect me. There is a carriage, and a man looking out. I guess he is for you. Step carefully, old man. The step is high. There! that is right. Good-bye, Neil. Be sure you write or telegraph if anything goes wrong. Here, my man! Are you looking for Mr. Neil Stuart?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then here he is. Take good care of him, mind; and look out for him all you can. You won't lose anything by it. Good-bye, old man."

"Good-bye, Morgan, and a thousand thanks."

He wrung the hand that was placed in his, and Morgan turned again toward the train. He had not gone more than half a dozen steps in the direction of the train, however, when he sprang back, crying out:

"Neil—I say, Neil!" Then laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, he whispered in his ear: "The pretty girl has got out here. She is a stunner, and don't you forget it! It won't be so lonely, after all, old fellow, if you play your cards well, and I rather fancy you will. After all, I think I envy you. I will come, Neil. You may expect me sure, now."

### CHAPTER III.

WITH something like joy tugging at her heart at the sight of a familiar face, notwithstanding the fact that she had left home only so short a time previous, Olga walked towards the man whom Morgan Adeson had just left.

"Williams! she cried, almost joyfully. "Williams, is it really you? How does it happen that you are here?" I thought I should have to walk all the way home, and the contemplation was not a pleasant one, I can tell you. How does it happen that you are here?"

She repeated her question as a delighted child does, and the man changed colour, and shifted from one foot to the other before replying.

"Is it you miss?" he asked. "Your mother doesn't expect you, that I know, for she said nothing of your coming."

"Then how do you happen to come?"

"Your mother sent me to—to meet this gentleman, miss."

And then, for the first time, Olga seemed to understand that there was a strange man beside her. She turned and looked into his dark eyes apologetically, and observed that he was smiling, as if with pleasure.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said; "but I did not even see you. Are you a friend of my mother?"

"I hope some day to lay claim to that distinction," answered Neil; "but at present I have never had the pleasure of meeting her."

"Oh! And you are going to my mother's house?"

"I—I don't know," he stammered. "The fact is, that I have engaged board here for a few weeks, and have just arrived. If you are Miss Bretherton then I suppose that it must be with your mother, as the name of the lady who has promised to let me stay at her house for awhile is Mrs. Bretherton."

"I don't understand it in the least," exclaimed Olga, knitting her brows into a perplexed frown. "My mother said nothing about it to me, and—"

"The fact is, Miss Olga," interrupted Williams, doggedly, "she knew that you would not approve of her taking a boarder, and she never told you nothin' about it. She thought as how you was gone for the summer, and there was no reason why you should know about it to worry and fret your head about, so she just never said nothin'. Me and her just arranged it all between ourselves, and now, the very first day, here you are back!"

He said it in almost an injured tone, and Olga was apologetic in her reply.

"I was not pleased at all, you see, Williams, with the place, and so I returned at once. I really don't know what to do."

"If I am at all in the way," exclaimed Neil, "I will just remain here until the next train comes and go back to the city; only, if you don't mind, I wish you would keep me overnight or drive me to some inn or hotel. You see, I am very tired from the trip, and the doctor has forbidden my getting over-fatigued."

"There is a hotel just down the road," said Olga, doubtfully; "but—"

"Then will you kindly allow your man to take me there? It would be almost impossible for me to find it myself, never having been here before. Perhaps you have not observed it, Miss Bretherton, but I—I am blind!"

Somehow he hesitated to speak of his affliction in her presence. The sound of her sweet, musical voice had been more exquisite than the loveliest opera to which he had ever listened. It was like hearing the birds' song in the sweet, fresh country morning, and it seemed to him like spoiling some precious illusion to let her know that he could not see her beautiful face.

She started and looked at him closely.

How handsome he was! How singularly handsome, with those short nut-brown curls clustering about his well-shaped head, that curling moustache of a trifle lighter shade, until it seemed that the sunlight had got tangled in it, and those darkly royal eyes! And then, unconsciously, her hand went up to the hideous scar on the side of her face, and a crimson flush crept from throat to brow.

"I beg your pardon, sir, a thousand times!" she exclaimed, her voice deeper and fuller and richer than it had been before. "I did not know—I should not know even now if it were not that you have told me. Oh, I hope you will forgive me for my discourtesy; it seems so cruel when—The hotel is a horrid place, and— Will you overlook what I said just now, and come to my mother's house?"

"If you will be good enough to let me stay there overnight."

"Ah, now you reproach me! I beg that you will carry out any arrangement that you have made with my mother, if you think that you can

endure association with a person so ill-natured as I."

Neil smiled.

"I shall be so glad to stay," he said, with the simplicity almost of a child.

The tears came to her eyes as she glanced up at him. And even then, in those few minutes, a thought came to her. She would not be so alone in that desolate country, even where she avoided the companionship of the simple country folk because of their cruel remarks upon her misfortune. She would have the association of this refined, cultured man, and better than all, he would not know of her hideous misfortune. She could talk to him, she could open her heart, she could hear of the outside world, and she need never be afraid of his pity nor his repulsion, because he need never know of that awful mark that destroyed her beauty and made life a curse to her.

She was almost grateful that he was blind. She was almost glad that the beautiful sunshine was shut out from him.

"We are ready, Williams," she said, quietly. "Will you take the gentleman to the carriage?"

Williams took him by the arm and led him to the rickety old conveyance; but he could not see how shabby it was, and again Olga found herself giving thanks. Then Williams placed him inside, and a moment later she found herself beside him, and the carriage had started.

"It sounds so absurd to call me 'the gentleman,'" he said with a smile. "My name is Stuart—Neil Stuart."

"And mine Olga Bretherton."

"It is beautiful. Somehow it suits your voice. You must not mind my absurdities, Miss Bretherton. I may as well confess at once that I am not always like other people. I try to be, but somehow it doesn't seem to suit me, and I give it up because it is an affectation. A name appeals to me and I sometimes wreath a personality about it. I wish almost that I had not heard a description of you, in order that I might have given you an idea of how I can fit a description to a voice and a name."

A quick stab shot through her heart.

"Then you have heard a description of me?" she asked, in a queer little voice which he could not quite understand.

"Only a partial one. A friend of mine came with me to the station, and he told me of you as you sat in the train; but he could not see your face."

She heaved a sigh of relief.

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

"Some day when you know me well, you will give me the privilege that is often accorded to blind men, and let me pass my fingers over your face, will you not?"

She shivered slightly.

"Some day," she answered, in the same curious tone—"some day when I know you well."

"What a strange tone your voice has sometimes! Not as if you were altogether happy. But, there! I am forgetting that we met not five minutes ago. There is another privilege that is always accorded blind men, Miss Bretherton, and that is the privilege of an immediate friendship with everyone we meet. Are you going to deny me that, and wait until time makes us friends?"

"No," she answered, drawn toward the kindness of his tone, drawn toward the expression in his handsome face. "You shall be my friend now, if you wish. I shall have nothing to do of special importance for a little while, and I shall take it upon myself to be your special guide, if you wish it. I shall—But I forget; you may have a valet coming, and—"

She had drawn back, her face growing white again; but it did not remain so long.

"Oh, no!" he said, with a short laugh; "I am not one of the favoured ones; I have not enough money to afford a valet. When I'm at home I don't need one. You see, there are mother and father to look after, and they are old. Of course, my sister does what I will allow her; but she is dependent upon her husband for her wealth, and I don't like to have her take what belongs to him for them; consequently I do it myself, and the work grows rather tedious at times."

"Work?"

"Yes, I write for a living. There! I am telling you all about myself, am I not?"

"Nothing in which I am not interested."

"That is so good of you! Perhaps you will help me sometimes."

"You don't know what pleasure it would give me. But here we are at home, and there is mother at the door."

"She will be surprised to know that we are friends already. Ah, Miss Bretherton, I am so glad already that I have come! I can feel this pure bracing air getting into my veins, and doing already the good work that is so necessary to be done. And I am so grateful for the friendship that you have promised me. A new volume has begun. I wonder what the end will be!"

Her heart thrilled beneath his words, and she could find no answer to them. She stepped by him and out of the carriage; then her hand touched his with a feeling that was electrical.

"Come," she said, unsteadily; "my mother is waiting for you."

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE weather was delicious; a balmy breeze kept the trees in constant motion, and seemed to waft the perfume of the flowers straight into the souls of those two who sat, day after day, in their midst.

And how happy they were, both of them!

It seemed to Neil Stuart that the sweet day had never contained so few fleeting hours. He was summoned to dinner before he realised the morning was half gone, and he was summoned to supper—that dear, old-fashioned meal that he had not known since his childhood—before he realized that an hour of the short, beautiful afternoon had vanished.

And Olga? She was feverishly happy. There was a constant and growing fear in her heart that some one, by accident or design, might mention in his presence the fact of the terrible blemish upon her beauty. She knew that with all his artist soul he worshipped beauty, and there was the wildest longing born within her that he should not know of her physical defect; and so she kept beside him, day after day, in order that if any such chance should present itself, she might be near to advert it.

"I will be happy for these few short weeks," she cried to herself, with feverish passion. "Why should others have everything, and I be even denied the crumbs that fall from the table? He shall not know! I will enjoy all that there is in my wretched life to enjoy. What harm can it do to me? He will hate me when he knows that I have deceived him, but I will at least have this to remember. They cannot rob me of the dear, sweet days that have been."

And they were heavenly sweet. If fits of passionate despair came to her at night, they were dead at the birth of the new day, and in his presence she was as light-hearted and merry as the veriest child.

"What has come over Miss Olga?" Williams enquired of her mother, as they stood together in the kitchen on one of those beautiful August days. "She doesn't seem at all like herself."

Mrs. Bretherton sighed.

"I don't know, Williams," she answered, gently. "But, Williams, you know how sensitive Miss Olga is about—about the scar upon her cheek. I wish you would not by any chance speak of it in the presence of Mr. Stuart, will you?"

"No, ma'am; of course I won't. But—excuse me, Mrs. Bretherton—but have you ever thought that Miss Olga—"

"Don't make any surmises, Williams. You know Miss Olga would not like it."

And the man, who was more like a friend of the family than a serving-man, saw the pain in the kindly, still handsome face, and spoke no more.

He looked away out under the giant oak where Neil was lying at full length, his hands folded under his head, his sightless eyes fixed upon the branches of the trees, as if their beauty were plainly visible to him. Williams knew that Miss Olga was reading to him, though he could not

even hear the tones of her voice; but somehow he, too, sighed as he turned away from the tableau that, even to his ignorant mind contained something strangely pathetic.

Olga was completing a poem and the words fell slowly from her lips,—

"For life in perfect whole  
And aim consummated is love in sooth,  
As nature's magnet-head rounds pole with pole."

She let the book fall into her lap, and there was silence upon them, save for the gentle *frou-frou* of the breeze through the leaves. It sounded cool and sweet and soothing.

And then, after a time, Neil repeated the first line of the poem, dreamily,—

"We cannot live except thus mutually."

There was another pause, and then he said, slowly,—

"Do you believe that?"

"Yes," she answered, preserving the perfect poetry of the scene by the tone of her beautiful voice. "What would there be in life else?"

"Ah! but it is through love that I mean. But what have I to do with love, even in thought or theory? It is a dangerous subject for a blind man to dwell upon, is it not?"

There was something in his voice that thrilled her. She looked into his handsome face, conscious that he could not discern the passion of her own, and controlled her voice as she replied,—

"Why should you not? Because Heaven has seen fit to afflict you is not a reason why you should be deprived of the best and holiest things in life, is it?"

He raised himself slightly, and turned his sightless eyes upon her.

"Yes; it is a reason," he answered, with more passion than she had ever heard him indulge before. "Do you think that I could ever make myself a burden upon any woman? Do you think—But there! I try to be resigned, and it will not do for me to talk of it. It is very hard for me to be resigned, Olga. You will let me call you Olga, will you not, when we are here alone, and no one else can hear?"

"Yes," she answered, softly.

"It is very hard to be resigned to the loss of sight, Olga," he repeated, lingering over the name almost yearningly. "You don't know what it is to be afflicted, and you cannot understand what it means."

Did she not? After all what was his affliction to hers? She would have gone blind and barefoot for the rest of her life to have had that hideous scar removed from her cheek. But he could not see the quivering pain in her face, and continued,—

"Oh, I love nature! I love the flowers and the sunlight, and the stars splashed and flashing in the canopy of Heaven; and yet I am denied them! I love beauty. I worship it! There are times, Olga, when I feel that I would give the whole of my life for one look into your beautiful face!"

She shrank back, barely able to repress the cry that arose to her lips, but with the wonderful intuition of the blind, he seemed to feel it.

"What is it?" he whispered.

She laughed slightly, but unnaturally.

"Nothing," she answered; only—only it was so wrong of you to say that! You—you have others to think of, you know."

"But no one of so much interest to me as you, Olga. Your sweet voice is an inspiration to me. When I can take the time from our dear days that have grown in this short time so precious to me, I feel that I shall give to the world something that will make it better for my having lived. And you will be the inspiration, Olga. It will owe it all to you. And if I feel so much from the sound of your voice, from the touch of your sweet, soothing fingers, what should I not do with your beautiful face before me? Oh, Olga, I adore beauty! Oh, I wish—I wish that I could but see you for one little moment."

She had grown as white as the dead, and her lips trembled so violently that she dared not speak. Then he continued, after a little pause,—

"Do you know why I came here, dear?"

"No," she stammered, faintly.

"My doctor sent me. He sent me to gain health and strength, in order that I should be physically able to endure an operation in the autumn that may give me back my sight. I have never had much faith in it. I have never believed that I would see again, until—now. I don't quite understand; but my wild, passionate desire has given me hope, I think. Do you know, I have found myself praying—I, who have not said a prayer in years!—that Heaven would give it back to me? And it is all that I might have the happiness of seeing you, Olga!"

There was positive terror in her eyes.

"And suppose," she said, little above a whisper—"suppose, when your sight is restored—if it should ever be—you should find me not what you have pictured me? Suppose I should be ugly, and—"

He interrupted her with a little laugh.

"Then," he said, tenderly, "I am afraid that I should grow to abhor that nature which I have loved so well, because she could make so incongruous a mistake. Ah, you can never make me believe that you are not beautiful, Olga, because—because I love you, dear!"

She started as if he had struck her, and shrunk back when he would have touched her. He seemed to feel it, and a curious whiteness came into his face.

"There!" he said, "I have offended you. I did not mean to do it, Olga. I did not intend to speak those words. I know that a blind man has no right to tell a lovely young thing that he loves her, and then expect her society afterwards. I should have waited until I had seen the result of that operation, and then, if my sight should have been restored, I should have come to you, and begged of you to become my wife. But now you will hate me. You will not be the same in my society, when I come to you. You will not let me see the perfect purity of your soul and open your heart to me as you have done in the past. Oh, Olga, can't you forgive my presumption? Can't you understand the madness that possessed me, and forgive it, if—"

"Hush!" she whispered, unable to control her own emotions, and feeling that she must comfort him. "Hush! There can never be anything more between us than there is now; but your words have given me the greatest happiness that I have ever known in my whole wretched life!"

"Olga!" he cried, "you love me?"

"Don't!" she cried, hysterically—"don't, for pity's sake! It is only for your own sake—only for your sake that I must not listen! Don't ever speak of it again! Oh, gracious Heaven! what have I done?"

But he did not seem to hear her. His arms were about her and his lips upon hers. There was the wildest, most exultant happiness surging in his breast; but the very light in the blind eyes only brought the most seething torture to Olga.

"I shall die when he knows the truth!" she moaned, in the depths of her own heart, as she lay there upon his breast, with his first kiss still moist upon her lips. "At least, I may be happy for a few short days, and then— He shall never know—he shall never know—until I am dead!"

She crushed the despairing cry in her heart, and returned his caress with a fervour equal to his own.

And Neil Stuart was happy!

## CHAPTER V.

THERE was nothing but happiness in those dear, warm, languishing days that followed that whispered tale of love beneath the trees.

For the first time in all those cruel years Olga was forcing herself to forget her own deformity, and revel in the love of this man who had in those few short days grown to be the heart of her heart. She never looked at herself in the mirror, she no longer gazed with fascinated horror at the reflection of her own ghastly misery: and

if sometimes she set her teeth hard as the thought of the barrenness of the future would force itself upon her, she would thrust it aside with bitter determination, and seek his society in whose presence she could know nothing but joy and contentment.

And Niel Stuart lived in a sweet, idyllic dream. She was his Psyche, his soul-thought, his hope, his future. He would lie at full length under the trees by the hour, and try to think of how he should feel when he could look upon her glorious beauty and realize that it was all his. It was the one desire of his life. He seemed to have forgotten all those wonders of nature that he had so longed to look upon in the past. He no longer remembered that it was a sight of his mother's beloved countenance that he had yearned to see. It was only Olga now. There was but one light, but one life, but one human thing in all the world to him, and that was Olga.

"Let me touch your sweet face, darling," he said to her on one of those exquisite sunny days as they sat under the trees together. "It seems to contain all there is of hope to me. Is it not singular how I dreaded to come to this dear country home? Is it not strange how I shrunk from it! And yet I have found the ideal heaven that the saints have pictured, here. Ah, how little I thought that it was through the gates of Arcadia that I was passing! Olga, I have never loved but you!"

And then the tender fingers wandered lovingly over the side of the face that was turned to him. As they would have passed to the other side, she shrank back with a little laugh, painfully forced, but he was too happy to understand.

"Foolish boy," she whispered, kissing the fingers that had caressed her. And then she leaned forward, holding his hands closely, and looking into the blind eyes with an earnestness that would have startled him had he been able to see, as she said, almost hoarsely,—

"Neil, suppose that—suppose that anything should happen in the—in the future to separate us—suppose—"

But he would not allow her to complete the sentence. A sudden pallor had grown upon his countenance, and he drew her to him almost fiercely.

"Hush!" he exclaimed. "It is cruel, even as a suggestion. It would ruin me body and soul, Olga. You can hardly understand what it is to have this fullness come into a hitherto empty life. Do you think that chaos would not reign upon the earth if the light should be snuffed out from the sun? Why, my darling, I have always believed sight to be the master possession of the whole universe; but I know now that I would remain blind for the rest of my life, and hope for no future in heaven, for the precious happiness of your dear love!"

Her heart gave a great bound. His physician had not absolutely promised him sight. It was only a hope after all. Suppose he should fail? Suppose that sight never should be restored to those darkly handsome eyes? Could not her love compensate him for the loss? Had he not said that he preferred it! She knew that if that miracle ever should be performed, that they must separate for ever. Was it, then, a sin for her to pray that his sight might never be restored? Was it a crime upon her part against him?

She loved him. Her whole form trembled as the thought came to her that there was a possibility that he might never see. She leaned forward again, her voice quivering under its earnestness.

"Neil," she said slowly, "if—if your sight never should be restored, dear, would you be content to pass your life here in the sweet country, beneath the hawthorn trees? Would you be content to pass your life with me for your only companion? To sit by the great, crackling log fire in winter, with me to read to you when you were tired of your work, with long rides over the frosty roads, just waiting for the dear spring time that you know will come again?"

He smiled, and passed his hands caressingly over the spun silk of her hair.

"More than content, sweetheart—blissfully happy! But even if my sight should never be

restored, Olga, I should not allow you such seclusion as that. In spite of my lack of fortune, dear, I have a position in society that I want my sweet wife to maintain. I want the world to admire her as I do, and—"

"But if I desired it, Neil? If I were happier here?"

"Why then, love, here we should remain. Do you love the country so well, little one? Then the country it shall be. Sight or blindness, there is only you for me, and your desire is my law. Do you know that I could almost fancy a note of unhappiness in your voice when you said that. Could you ever be unhappy with me, Olga?"

"Never! Never! It is only the thought of being without you that—strangles me. It is only the thought of having you forget me that is the death of my very soul."

"Do you love me so much?"

The pallor of her face was pitiful.

"My love is sinful, Neil. It is worship!"

He drew her to him and kissed her passionately.

"How can I ever thank Heaven for all that I have received," he whispered.

"Don't thank Heaven!" she cried bitterly. "It is too much, Neil! Too much! Heaven will punish me! Why, dear, I would keep you blind if I could. I would hide you from every friend that you possess on earth. I would conceal you from your own mother. I would make of you a hermit in the mountain fastnesses, with no eye to look upon you but my own, and no hand to wait upon you save mine. Neil, I think that I could—do anything—even to—murder to hold your love."

He lifted the hands that had grown icy to his lips and pressed them, and then he laughed slightly.

"Your voice sounded as tragic as that of Bernhardt when she was acting Leah," he said, soothingly. "I don't know what I have ever done to deserve such love as yours, my darling, but my own is equally as great. If the opportunity should ever come for me to prove it, I think you would know that it is stronger than my life, Olga."

He kissed her, and they sat silent for some time, hand in hand; then he said, very gently:

"I hear a footstep, Olga. Who is it?"

"Only old Williams," she answered, quietly.

"A letter for you, sir!" the old servant exclaimed, as he approached them.

He placed the letter in the outstretched palm, and then turned slowly away.

Neil gave it to Olga.

"Read it to me, dear," he said, with his usual tenderness. "You are my eyes, you know. Is it from my mother?"

"No," she answered. "It is a man's writing."

"Probably from Frank, my brother-in-law, or from Morgan."

"It is from Morgan Adeson," looking at it closely.

"Dear old Morgan! I had almost forgotten him in my happiness. Read it to me, Olga."

"DEAR NEIL"—she read aloud—"what under the sun is the matter? Here you have been shut out in the wilderness for more than three weeks, and never a line from you. Has the pretty girl in the train so completely monopolized you that you have forgotten all your old friends? I called at the house last night and heard from your mother that you are still alive, which I was beginning to doubt; but she tells me you are in wonderful spirits, and are fast regaining your health. But she did not say a word about the pretty girl. What has become of her? I am sure you never let such an opportunity as that escape you, and for that very reason it looks suspicious to me. I am getting worried about you. For that reason I am going to take a run up to see you. You may expect me almost as soon as this letter arrives, and if you are far from the station you might send some sort of a conveyance to meet me Thursday, by the ten-thirty train, as from what I remember of that little station, there was not much promise in the way of lively accommodations. You need not trouble to reply, even by telegram, because I know you are still there, and

I shall come under any circumstances. For a few hours then, *au revoir*, old man.

Yours, as of old,

"MORGAN ADESON."

How Olga ever completed the reading of that letter she could never remember. It was to her as if a knife had entered her soul, and was being slowly turned round in the horrible, ghastly wound that had been made. Her face was as white as death itself, her lips almost blue under their compression. There was a stony stare in the eyes as they fixed themselves upon Neil Stuart. If she had been looking upon his dead face in a coffin, it would have hurt her less.

"Dear old Morgan!" exclaimed Neil, with irrepressible delight. "I am so glad. How you will like him, Olga, and how he will like you! But you must promise that he shall not steal you from me."

She did not hear his words. There was a hideous cry seeming to go through all her soul.

"The end has come so soon," it said—"so soon. This man will tell him. I shall never dare to look into the dead blind eyes again, knowing that he will shrink from me, even sightless as he is. Oh, Heaven! why have you not punished me with death instead of this?"

## CHAPTER VI.

OLGA never knew how she managed to get through that evening without betraying her anguish of mind to the man she loved.

It seemed to her, as she sat there listening to his romantic words of hope for the future, of his newly resurrected belief in God, of his love and of his faith, that she was hearing the sounds of that voice for the last time: that she was looking upon his beloved face with that paralysis of the senses that one feels in gazing upon an adored dead countenance.

The words he was saying seemed to form no part of the situation. It was only the sound of the voice, the play of expression upon the face, not one change of which escaped her sharpened senses.

And it seemed to her that she suffered more under the torture of her own silence than from the fact that this was their real parting. She dared say no word of farewell to him. She dared not whisper to him of the agony that was filling her heart to bursting. She could only sit there in dry-eyed, stony despair, not daring even to press the fingers that she held for fear his quick perceptions might cause him to suspect the truth.

"Good-night, my darling," he said to her fondly, as they stood together in the little parlour before retiring for the night.

One arm was about her shoulders, while the hand of the other held her head at the back. He was gazing sightlessly into her eyes, and the white compression of her lips was lost to him.

"Good-night, Neil," she murmured, strangling her anguish as some indication of it would have escaped her.

"You have been so strange this evening," he said, slowly. "I wish that you would tell me just once again that you love me."

She put both her arms around him and kissed him with a passion that she had never shown before.

"It is too weak!" she cried, hoarsely. "Oh, Neil! Neil! I have set up the idol contrary to the commandment. Pray that God will not punish me more than I can bear."

"My beautiful one! I can not thank Heaven that you believe sin to have touched you in even so sweet a way, and yet I would not have you love me less for the hope of heaven itself. Good-night, my own, and may all the angels guard you?"

He released her once, but she threw herself again upon his breast and kissed him. It was a strange influence that she exerted, so strange, that, after her passionate caress, he sighed. Perhaps he felt the despair in it. Perhaps the same impression touched him that came to Armand

when Camille left him upon that fatal day. But it was all so pure, so holy, so God-like!

And then she went into her own little room and shut and bolted the door.

The lamp was not lighted, but the moon came in pale gold rifts through the window, so calm, so peaceful, so contrary to her tempest-tossed soul. She loosened her gown at the throat as if the confinement suffocated her, then threw herself upon her knees before the window where the moon-rays lay upon her poor scarred face.

She did not cry out, or even speak, but knelt there with her hands clasped upon the sill, her eyes lifted to that unanswering Heaven to which we all mutely appeal when sorrow weighs us down. A gentle breeze soothingly lifted the soft hair from her brow. All nature seemed to be in a tender humour, and yet there was no opening in her soul to receive it.

For hours she remained there as motionless as the fixed stars. If she prayed, no movement of the stony lips gave evidence of it. Her white, drawn countenance never altered its expression, and even when the moon disappeared, and darkness came upon her, she arose curiously calm. Her legs ached from their long continuance in one position, and the physical pain seemed to bring her comfort.

She sat down in a chair there in the darkness and rubbed her hands over them half unconsciously, then suddenly she sat upright and flung out her arms with a gesture of bitterness.

"Morgan Adeson will be here to-morrow—no, to-day," she said, hoarsely. "There is one hope that may give me a few days of respite. The convict, condemned to death, will pray to the governor for a week—a day—of time before his sentence is executed; and what different am I from him? Heaven itself has signed my death-warrant. I read it with my own eyes the last time that I ever gazed upon myself in the mirror; but a few days' respite may be given me if this man, this friend of Neil, is generous. My love for Neil will give me the courage to ask it. It will only be a few days, a week, perhaps a month, and then eternal darkness, black as this which now rests upon my soul; but, oh, God! let me have at least those few remaining days."

She had covered the mirror in her room, so that no chance should reveal to her the features that she had grown to loathe, and a little shiver escaped her the following morning as she glanced in its direction. She did not approach it, but dressed hastily and went down-stairs.

Neil was there before her.

He heard her step upon the stairs, and went forward to meet her with that smile upon his lips to which her heart would always respond.

"Another glorious day, love," he said, as she entered. "I am glad that it is so when Morgan comes. He will know to-day what a fortunate man I am, and I want you to be beside me under the hawthorn-tree when I tell him of my happiness. Will you do that, Olga."

An awful whiteness spread over her face, but she controlled her voice wonderfully as she answered:

"If you wish, dear. But there is one thing that I am going to ask you, Neil. It seems such a silly thing now that I am to put it into words, and yet I wish you would humour me this time."

"And do you think I will not?"

"I want—I want to go to the station to meet—your friend myself."

He laughed lightly.

"Why, what a tremendous favour!" he exclaimed, playfully. "It is just what I would have desired. We will get old Williams to drive us over, and—"

"But—Neil—only two can ride in the carriage, you know."

"Only two?"

"Yes, dear! only two. Either you will have to go alone to meet him—or—I shall. May I—go, Neil?"

"Why, certainly, dear, if you really wish it, but—"

"Thank you. I felt sure that you would not refuse me."

"But why, Olga—why, dear? It seems strange."

She forced a little laugh to her lips.

"I want to see if he will like me. I want to have a little talk with him before you tell him—what we are to each other. Don't you understand, dear? I don't want to be quite a stranger to—to your friend—when you tell him that—"

"When I tell him that you have promised to be my wife!" he said, completing the sentence that she was stumbling over. "When I tell him that you have consented to make me the happiest man in all the world! All right, little one. You shall win his admiration first, if you wish."

A sigh of relief passed her lips.

"Breakfast is ready. Will you come in?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered. "I am as hungry as a wolf. Ah, love! what a happy man I am! How old Morgan will envy me! I think he was more than half in love with you in the train that day himself."

"But suppose he should not like me!" she insisted. "Suppose he should not think me as beautiful as—as you seem to imagine that I am. What then, Neil?"

"What then?" he repeated, with a laugh. "Well, I am afraid that I should attempt to knock him down. But there is not the slightest danger, my dear. The only trouble that I apprehend is that he will fall in love with you himself, and you will be able to understand that you have been very foolish to promise yourself to a blind man. But you will never cease to love me, Olga!"

He said it so wistfully that tears sprang to her eyes.

She reverently touched his face with the tips of her fingers.

"I shall never cease to love you, Neil," she whispered.

And then together they went into the breakfast-room. It was simple enough, with its plain dimity curtains tied back with pale ribbons, but there was something so cool and sweet and fresh about it that no one thought of finding fault with its lack of splendour. And then there was Mrs. Bretherton at the end of the table, with her snowy hair arranged in a simple knot at the back of her head, and gowned in a cool print, who seemed to be the embodiment of the spirit that such a room required.

She smiled lovingly at Olga, and spoke to Mr. Stuart as they both came in for the dainty breakfast that no one knew better than she how to cook and serve, and watched with much satisfaction as Neil set to with royal appetite.

She forgot to observe Olga, but she noticed when old Williams entered that even the plate of strawberries had not disappeared; but Olga rose at once, with a flush of excitement, as old Williams exclaimed:

"The carriage is ready, and there is just time to meet the 10.3 train."

(To be continued.)

THE Gothic nations of old were famous for the quantities of food and more particularly drink they could consume. In those days gluttony and drunkenness were so very common that they were not thought a disgraceful but a rather laudable vice. Under this persuasion, it was enacted in the law that judges should hear and determine causes fasting, and not after dinner. From this propensity of the older Britons to indulge excessively in eating and drinking has proceeded the restriction on jurymen to refrain from meat and drink, and to be even held in custody, until they have agreed upon their verdict.

THERE are four swords belonging to the City of London: First the sword of state, borne before the Lord Mayor as the emblem of his civic authority. This is the sword which used to be surrendered to the sovereign at Temple Bar and when he came within the precincts of the corporation. Second, the pearl sword, from the nature of its ornaments, which is carried before the Lord Mayor on all occasions of ceremony and festivity. Third, the sword placed at the Central Criminal Court above the Lord Mayor's chair. Fourth, a black sword, to be used in Lent, on days of public fasts, and on the death of any of the Royal family.

## FACETIE.

"Has he any money to live on?" "Nothing but the cents of humour."

HE: "I drunk some champagne you, know, and after awhile it went to my head." She: "That was the only empty place left, I suppose."

"PAPA, do men descend from monkeys?" "Yes, my boy." "And what about the monkeys?" "The monkeys descend—aw—from the trees."

A FACETIOUS fellow, who had occasion to send postcards to a small town where there is a post-mistress, writes this legend on the top of the card: "Please forward after perusal."

FIRST PASSENGER: "I wonder why we are making such a long stop at this station." Second Passenger (a traveller of experience): "I presume it is because no one happens to be trying to catch the train."

WIFE: "Wake up, there are thieves in the house." Husband: "Go down and show them your new bonnet, and they won't waste any time looking for money here."

FOND MOTHER (listening to baby's cries): "What a sweet-toned voice she has, dear. She'll be a splendid singer. We must send her to Italy and have her voice cultivated." Brutal Father (trying to sleep): "Send her now."

HE: "Is there anything I can do to prove my affection so that you will not doubt it?" She: "There is. Marry sister. She is older than I, and mamma is determined not to let me marry till sister is disposed of."

MRS. BILLINGTON was opening the letters at the breakfast table. "John, dear," she remarked, "here's a bill for eight guineas for a new dress." "Just like your fearful extravagance. What the!"—"for a new dress-suit, from your tailor."

THE FIRST BORE: "We're living quite close to you now, Lady Rivaside." The Second Bore: "Yaaa. That's our house-boat yonder on the river." Lady Rivaside: "Well, do drop in, both of you. Shall be so glad!"

FIRST OCULIST: "I had the most interesting case yesterday that I ever had the pleasure of attending to." Second Oculist: "What was that?" "A young lady called who, instead of a common pupil, had a college student in her eye."

"If you marry Grace," exclaimed an irate father to his son, "I'll cut you off without a penny, and you won't have so much as a piece of pork to boil in the pot." "Well," said the young man, "Grace before meat," and he immediately went in search of a minister.

"My daughter will never get another place with the character you've been giving her, my lady." "I've only told the truth about your daughter, and nothing but the truth." "How would you like the truth and nothing but the truth told about you, my lady?"

A PEPPERY PARSON who was disturbed by his choir during prayer time, got even with them when he gave out the closing hymn by adding, "I hope the entire congregation will join in singing this grand old hymn, and I know the choir will, for I heard them humming it during the prayer."

SHE: "No, Mr. Woodwed, I do not love you. I speak thus frankly because I think it best to be plain with you." He (eager for revenge): "There is no need for your exerting yourself in that direction, Miss Gotrox. When nature planned your face it was upon lines which will always prevent your being other than plain with me or any one else. Good morning."

HE (the bridegroom at Brighton): "Do you want to go on the pier?" She (the bride): "Do you?" He: "I do, if you do." She: "If you do, I do, dear." He: "Just as you say." She: "Do, dear, take your choice." He: "Well, I don't want to unless you want to." She: "I don't want to unless you want to. (With solicitude) Do you want to?" He: "If you want to, dearest." She (timidly): "Well, let's go?" He: "Are you sure you want to go?" She: "If you are." He (timidly): "Well, let's go." After all they do go.

WIFE: "That insurance agent who dined with us last night seemed a very gentlemanly fellow. Is he going to take you, dear?" Husband: "No. He says I am too great a risk." Wife: "Why, there isn't anything the matter with you, is there?" Husband: "Oh, no. But he accidentally learned that you cooked the dinner."

In a passenger train that recently left Liverpool for London there was a darkey who kept putting his head out of the window. "Keep your head inside," said the guard, angrily. "Whaffor!" demanded the coloured one. "For fear you should damage some of the iron-work on the bridge, you idiot!" answered the guard.

A LITTLE school girl asked her teacher what was meant by "Mrs. Grundy." The teacher replied that it meant "the world." Some days afterward the teacher asked the geography class, to which this little bud of promise belonged, "What is a zone?" After some hesitation, the girl brightened up, and replied, "I know. It's a belt around Mrs. Grundy's waist."

"Why, I don't understand it at all," said an uptown woman to a caller on her doorstep whom she had never met before; "you say that you are a singing teacher, and that Mrs. Brown across the street sent you here. I don't want a singing teacher." "I beg your pardon, madam," replied the caller; "she said she heard you sing, and you wanted a teacher badly."

"I WANT to go fishing," remarked a man who has brought many fish home from his piscatorial expeditions, "but I can't decide exactly where I'd better go." His wife, to whom this remark has been made, looked up from her work very sweetly. "What's the matter with the fish market, Henry?" she said, so significantly that Henry blushed a deep crimson.

WAITER: "That gentleman has ordered anchovies on toast, and we have none left. What shall I say to him?" Restaurant Keeper: "Tell him that we have some left, but you wouldn't care to offer them to him. That will give him the impression that you wish to serve him well, and at the same time it will keep up the reputation of the house."

GEORGE: "So Miss Flirtie has refused you. I knew she would. Laughed at you, I suppose. Told you she wouldn't marry you if you were the last man in the world, didn't she? I know her. The cold, cruel—!" Jack: "Oh, you do her injustice. She was very kind, very considerate. She let me down easy, indeed she did." "What did she say?" "I don't know. She refused me in French."

THE knack of looking at the bright side of things was never developed to such perfection as in the case of a Manxman, who, after a railway accident, telegraphed to his friend's wife: "Your husband killed in railway accident; head, both arms and both legs cut off." But later this correction was received: "First report exaggerated; your husband killed; head and legs cut off, but only one arm."

"JAMES," exclaimed Mrs. McNagg to her patient and long-suffering husband the other night, just as he was dropping off into his first doze, "I'm certain that I heard something moving downstairs, and I'm sure it's burglars. Get up at once, James, and see what it is. And, oh dear, if you find any burglars, what will you do?" "Do!" repeated her husband, with great calmness, as he got up and prepared to explore the regions downstairs, "I will do whatever they want me to do, of course. I have never had my own way once in this house yet, and it is too late to begin now."

AN Irishman stood charged with stealing a watch from a fellow-citizen. He stoutly denied the impeachment, and brought a counter-accusation against his accuser for assault and battery committed with a frying-pan. The judge was inclined to take a common-sense view of the case, and, regarding the prisoner, said, "Why did you allow the prosecutor, who is a smaller man than yourself, to assault you without resistance? Had you nothing in your hand to defend yourself with?" "Bedad, your honour," answered Pat, "I had his watch; but what was that against a frying-pan?"

"I HEARD you when you came home last night," said landlady Snapshot to a lodger who had attended a protracted smoking-concert the previous evening, "and it was ever so late. And let me tell you, Mr. P., that if you were my husband I should make you come home earlier, so I should." "Indeed," said Mr. P., "and let me tell you, madam, that if you were my wife, I shouldn't come home at all."

MRS. HANSON: "I understand, sir, that you have secretly been making love to my daughter, and I must forbid an acquaintance begun in that way. You should have seen me first." Shrewd Suitor: "Madame, had I seen you first, I should have forgotten your daughter and fallen in love with you." Mrs. Hanson: "Um—the informality of the proceeding was all I objected to. Come with me, and I will introduce you."

A SCOTCHMAN giving evidence at the bar of the House of Lords in the affair of Captain Porteus and telling of the variety of shot which was fired upon that unhappy occasion, was asked by the Duke of Newcastle what kind of shot it was. "Why," said the man in his broad dialect, "sic as they shoot fools (fowls) wi an the like." "What kind of fools?" asked the duke, smiling at the word. "Why, my lord, dukes (ducks) an' sic kind o' fools."

At a certain place of public entertainment a student was bragging of his manifold accomplishments, until at length one of the company lost patience, and said, in a gruff tone: "Now we've heard enough about what you can do. Come, tell us what there is you can't do, and I'll undertake to do it myself." "Well," replied the student with a yawn, "I can't pay my account here; so glad to find you're the man to do it." And the critic paid, amid roars of laughter from the audience.

"I SUPPOSE, doctor," said Cumso to Dr. Pare-sis, "that a large proportion of the ills of your patients are imaginary?" "Yes, sir, quite a large proportion." "And your treatment of such cases, I suppose, is by imaginary pills?" "Well, I suppose you might call it that." "Then, of course, for treating imaginary ills with imaginary pills, you send in imaginary bills?" "Oh, my dear sir, nothing of the kind. There's nothing imaginary about the bills. I have to draw the line somewhere."

THE father of the present Lord T—, who was remarkable for the stateliness of his manners, one day, riding through a village in the vicinity of Oxford, met a lad dragging a cow along the road, who, when his lordship came up to him, made a stop and stared him full in the face. His lordship asked the boy if he knew him. He replied, "Ees." "What is my name?" "Why, Lord T—," answered the lad. "Then, why don't you take off your hat?" "I—I will, sur," said the boy, "if ye'll hold the cow."

"HAS a telegram come for me, my dear?" questioned Mr. Bingo. "Have you been expecting one?" asked Mrs. Bingo. "Oh, no, of course not," sarcastically. "You don't suppose I would ask you that question if I expected one, do you?" "You might, dear," said Mrs. Bingo sweetly. "What would you say, now, if I should say that a telegram has come for you?" "Aha! I knew it. I've been expecting that telegram all the afternoon. Where is it?" impatiently. "I'll get it. But, dear, I thought it best to open it. You didn't mind, did you, dearest?" "Certainly not. It's only a matter of business. From Jack Enslow, ain't it?" "Yes, dear." "Important meeting to-night. Says I must be there, doesn't he?" "Yes, dear." "I knew it," said Bingo, rubbing his hands. "Well, I'll have to rush right off after dinner. Sorry for you, my dear, but you know business must be attended to." "Oh, that's all right, darling. But don't you want to see the message?" "Why should I? You opened it, read it, like the good wife that you are, and I guess that I can trust you. Jack wants me," delightedly, "that's all, and I must go." "But there was one thing more he said, my pet." "Oh, there was?" suspiciously. "Well, what was it?" "He says he's got front-row seats," replied Mrs. Bingo, all smiles.

## SOCIETY.

THE Emperor of Russia is in the habit of shooting principally by moonlight, or at day-break.

DENMARK ladies are great lovers of the bicycle, and clubs for riding the wheel are found in many of the larger towns.

THE Queen of Greece is president of a sisterhood devoted to the reformation of criminals, and she personally visits prisoners.

IN Sitka, when an Indian wife has lost her husband by death, she goes into mourning by painting the upper half of her face a deep black.

It is rumoured that the new Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha will endeavour to sell the Duke Ernest's splendid estate in the Tyrol, which is one of the most perfect sporting domains in Europe.

WHEN the new Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha come to London they will have a suite of rooms at Buckingham Palace, as their visits will naturally be few and for short periods.

THE Queen is evidently determined to show that by-gones are by-gones, and that the somewhat cool relations once existing between the Tecks and the Court are quite of the past.

A LADY is about to translate King Oscar of Sweden's literary works into English. The translator is an American-Swede by birth, Frau Anna von Rydingsvörd. She will be assisted by several Swedish literary men.

THE "wax-fitter" in the Queen's household arranges the candles on the dinner-table, for which he draws £60 a year, but he does not light them. That duty is performed by two lamp-lighters, drawing a salary of £100 each.

THERE is a new invention in a pocket umbrella constructed on the double fan principle, with, of course, a collapsing handle, and when not in use occupies an incredibly small space. In fact, it can be easily carried in the pocket. Such an invaluable invention should be almost as popular as sunshine.

THE villa which the Empress Eugénie has built at Cap Martin, near Mentone, is now finished, and she will probably take up her residence there for the winter in November. The villa is very pretty, and it is surrounded by pine woods, and commands lovely views of both land and sea.

STUDENTS of household management will learn with satisfaction that in 1566 many of the evils now to be complained of were distinctly recognised. Some of the more curious fines which were imposed by a country gentleman upon offending servants were a penny for leaving a door open, missing prayers, leaving beds unmade after eight (presumably A.M.); and cooks could only have followers at the rate of a penny fine for each one. A curious custom seems to have then existed that *entrée* to the house was denied during the family meals; and as the fine for allowing a breach of this custom was heavy, it may be presumed that the sin was esteemed great.

THE little Archduchess Elizabeth, daughter of the unfortunate Crown Prince Rudolph, who is just ten years old, spends her life very simply. She finished her last holidays with a small tour through the Alps, and is now busy with her lessons again. She is staying at Luxenburg, where she has a little garden all her own and a small cottage, the key of which she keeps in her pocket. The different rooms are inhabited by her pets; two lambs, rabbits, pigeons, and other birds. In the garden runs a little stream with miniature bridges; and for her Imperial Highness's last birthday a clever mechanic, who is in the Body Guard of the garrison at Luxenburg, presented her with a number of little mechanical toys, a mill, a barge, and several ships, for which the water is the motive power. They cause great delight to the princess "Die Kleine Frau," as she is called. She spends all her leisure at work in her garden, with her pets about her, but otherwise alone.

## STATISTICS.

AUSTRALIANS eat more meat and Italians less than the people of any other nations.

CHINA has six armoured vessels, where the United States has but three.

It is said, that on an average the letters received by the Emperor of Germany number 600 a day.

NALTKEHOF, the Geneva scientist, says there are 311,000 blind persons in Europe, resultant mostly from fevers, and that 75 per cent. would have kept their sight had they been properly treated.

## GEMS.

Do the truth you know, and you shall learn the truth you need to know.

SLANDER is the revenge of a coward, and disimulation his defence.

MISFORTUNE sprinkles ashes on the head of the man, but falls like dew on the head of the woman, and brings forth germs of strength of which she herself had no consciousness.

It is worth realising that there is no such thing as common-place life or uninteresting circumstances. They are so only because we do not see into them—do not know them.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

MOCK OYSTERS.—Grate the corn from about one dozen ears, add to it three tablespoonfuls of flour and the yolk of six eggs, well beat, season with salt and pepper; have an equal amount of lard and butter hot in the frying pan, and drop the corn into it in cakes the size of an oyster; fry a light brown, and serve hot.

PANCAKES, WAFFER.—Beat up four eggs with two tablespoonfuls of fine dry flour, the same quantity of cream, one ounce of pounded and sifted white sugar, and half an ounce of nutmeg grated. Rub the fryingpan with a piece of muslin containing a lump of butter. Pour in the batter so that it covers the bottom of the pan as thinly as possible, fry on one side only, lay the pancake on a very hot dish, sprinkle it with powdered sugar (flavoured or not); upon this lay the next pancake and so on till all are done. Serve very hot.

VICTORIA PLUM PRESERVE.—Split the plums up the side and take out the stones, if they come out easily, which they will if quite ripe. Then take one pound of sugar to each pound of plums, and put them in layers in a basin and leave all night. Then put the most of the sugar and liquid that will have gathered in the preserving pan. It may need a very little water to moisten it. Let it boil, and put in the plums, and boil half an hour. If the stones are difficult to come out, split the plums and leave them in. When they are boiling the stones will come to the top, and can be lifted out.

BEEF STEAK PIE.—Pound and a quarter of steaks, two mutton kidneys, one tablespoonful of flour, one teaspoonful of salt, quarter teaspoonful of pepper, rough puff paste. Have the steak cut very thinly, and into small pieces about four inches long and two broad; mix on a plate the flour, pepper, and salt; cut the kidneys down from the round side and skin them; divide each half into three thin slices, dip each of those slices, as well as the slices of steak, in the seasoning, and drop them lightly into the pie dish. The steak may be lightly rolled before being dropped in. When the dish is quite full, fill up with water, for gravy. Make up the rough puff paste. With this cover the pie. Brush over with egg, make an opening in the top, cut the form of leaves with a sharp knife on the paste, put an ornament in the middle, and bake one hour.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Snake River opal fields of Idaho are producing some beautiful and valuable stones.

WHAT the standing army of Hawaii lacks in numbers it makes up in dignity. It consists of 64 men, 3 of whom are generals.

THERE was a financial bank at Babylon as early as 700 B.C., and, so far as known, it was the first on record.

DOWN to the Norman conquest the Britons had "living money" and "dead money," the former being slaves and cattle, the latter metal.

SWEDISH women often work as farm labourers. Those that have babies carry them on their backs in a leather bag, as squaws carry their young. This plan permits the mother to use both hands at her farm-work.

AN augur that bores a square hole consists of a screw augur in a square tube, the corners of which are sharpened from within. As the augur advances, pressure on the tube cuts square the round hole.

FISH balance themselves in water by the muscular contraction of the air bladders. At death the muscles relax and the air bladder expands, with the result that the fish is thrown on one side and rises to the surface.

COLOUR-BLINDNESS is about twice as prevalent among highly-civilized nations as among semi-civilized. From four to five per cent. of the Norwegians are colour blind, while only two per cent. of the Indians on reservations are so afflicted.

TOUCH the convex side of a watch-glass upon water so as to leave a drop hanging on the glass. Pour a little ether into the concave side and blow upon it. The rapid evaporation of the ether will render the glass so cold that the drop of water will be frozen.

ONE jeweller's present to the newly-made Duchess of York was in the shape of a mouse-trap, with captive mice. The trap is just an inch long, and is made of very fine Indian gold wire. The little structure is mounted on a base of African ivory. The mice have been ingeniously formed from Australian apple pips.

ALL languages lift up their testimony in favour of the antiquity and universality of right-hand preference. According to Trench, our Anglo-Saxon word "left" expresses "little-used hand," in French *gauche*; "the weak hand," in Italian *manca*, "the defective;" and in modern Provençal *man seneco*, "the decrepit hand."

THE dreaded "death watch," as it is called, is a small beetle which has a very powerful joint in its neck, and calls its mate by tapping with its head on the wall or any surface where it may happen to be located. The noise is similar to that which may be produced by tapping with the finger-nails on a table, and the insect can frequently be made to answer such taps. Many country people call it the "blacksmith."

OVER the triple doorway of the Cathedral at Milan there are three inscriptions spanning the splendid arches. Over one is carved a beautiful wreath of roses, and underneath is the legend, "All that which pleases is but for a moment." Over the other is sculptured a cross, and these are the words, "All that which troubles us is but for a moment." Underneath the great central entrance, in the main aisle, is the inscription, "That only is important which is eternal."

OSTRICHES have three breeding seasons a year. The male digs a nest in the sand, where the female deposits an egg every other day until from ten to twenty are laid. Then the obedient male bird takes the main care of the nest, sitting from three p.m. until eight a.m., when the female sits till afternoon. Each nest is seven feet wide by three deep. A singular fact, not hitherto noted, is that the male, who sits at night, is black, while the female, who sits by day, is gray, each being adapted to its environment by colour protection. After the chicks are hatched, the male takes care of them, even to brooding over them at night. Occasionally he contrives to steal a few chicks from another male, and then there is a row.

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P. T.—The sons would share equally.

R. S.—A cable is 600 feet, or 100 fathoms.

WHITBY.—There are many books on the subject.

LISA.—The folding envelope was first used in 1839.

CONSTANT READER.—A penny stamp will be sufficient.

LOYAL LENA.—The Queen is about five feet in height.

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JANE GREY.—You had better apply to the justices as to the custody of the children.

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INQUIRITIVE.—He can positively refuse to trade, just as another can refuse to purchase.

NITA.—A father cannot compel his daughter, aged seventeen, to leave her place of service.

IGNORANCE.—Venezuela is in Central America; quite away from the region known as South America.

LANCEROT.—It is not necessary to have a license for a gun or revolver that is not taken out of the house.

TEDDY.—Whit Monday in 1894 will be 14th May; Whit Sunday is seven weeks after Easter.

DORA.—Many use pure paraffin oil scented with some perfume, rubbing it well into the roots.

DULCIE.—Fashions vary in hairdressing as much as in any part of a lady's toilette.

DUDLEY DUNCAN.—The only way is to inquire of the present possessor of the hall or castle.

ROLAND R.—No, you cannot marry again while your first wife is alive, unless you get a divorce.

SAM WELLER.—If he summons you for the rent, you had better attend the Court and explain the matter to the judge.

INDIGNANT TOM.—You had better apply to a magistrate for an order on your neighbour to abate the nuisance.

PHILIP R.—The great goldfields of South Africa were discovered in 1869 by an elephant hunter named Hartley.

ANNABEL.—A good lotion for greasy skin is pure rose water, sprinkled into the water in which the face is bathed.

ILL-USED WIFE.—If your husband leaves you without proper means of support you may summon him for desertion.

DELICATE DICK.—You will have to take advantage of advice given at the infirmaries if ordinary advice is not available to you.

P. T. O.—They are not entitled if the servant is dismissed, but if she deserts they may hold the things till she returns to settle.

ADMIRER OF THE "LONDON READER."—Charges of murder can only be heard before judges of the High Court of Justice.

JEANNETTE BEATON.—We have never heard of such result from the practice, but of course it is not whole-some eaten in that way.

POOR SLAVEY.—The law has laid down no rules as to domestic servants' days out. That is a matter of arrangement between master and mistress.

R. S.—"For life" and "for the term of your natural life" means precisely the same thing in sentencing a criminal, that is, twenty years.

T. T.—We really do not know what the local rules on the subject are. You had better inquire of your district excise officer.

BOB ACHES.—An apprentice is not a servant, and cannot be made to do work not connected with the trade his master has undertaken to teach him.

MARIE.—The expression would be incorrect if it appeared in a prose description of an event, but it is permitted in poetry.

NORRIS.—You should consult a respectable lawyer, and he will write your landlord pointing out his duty and the consequences of not fulfilling it.

Z. Y. X.—The name "milliner" really means "Milaner," the first hat trimmers in England having been ladies from Milan.

KATLEEN.—The words "Fabrique Verveloise," would imply that the article was manufactured at the town of Verviers, in France.

L. R.—The husband is liable, unless he can prove that he gave notice to the tradesman concerned not to give credit to the wife.

REGULAR READER.—A caretaker is (in the absence of agreement to the contrary) a tenant at will, and may be required to leave without notice.

## SHE AND I.

AND I said, "She is dead! I could not brook  
Again on that marvellous face to look."

But they took my hand and they led me in,  
And left me alone with my nearest kin.

Once again alone in that silent place,  
My beautiful dead and I, face to face.

And I could not speak, and I could not stir,  
But I stood and with love, I looked on her.

With love, and with rapture, and strange surprise,  
I looked on the lips and the close shut eyes;

On the perfect rest and the calm content  
And the happiness in her features blent.

And the thin white hands that had wrought so much,  
Now nerveless to kisses or fevered touch.

My beautiful dead who had known the strife,  
The pain and the sorrow that we call life.

Who had never faltered beneath her cross,  
Nor murmured when loss followed swift on loss.

And the smile that sweetened her lips away  
Lay light on her Heaven-closed mouth that day.

I smoothed from her hair a silver thread,  
And I wept, but I could not think her dead.

I felt with a wonder too deep for speech,  
She could tell what only the angels teach.

And down over her mouth I leaned my ear,  
Lest there might be something I should not hear.

Then out from the silence between us stole  
A message that reached to my inmost soul:

"Why weep you to-day who have wept before,  
That the road was rough I must journey o'er?"

"Why mourn that my lips can answer you not  
When anguish and sorrow are both forgot?"

"Behold, all my life I have longed for rest,—  
Yes, e'en when I held you upon my breast."

"And now that I lie in a breathless sleep,  
Instead of rejoicing, you sigh and weep."

"My dearest, I know you would not break—  
If you could—my slumber and have me wake."

"For though life was full of the things that bless,  
I have never till now known happiness."

Then I dried my tears, and with lifted head  
I left my mother, my beautiful dead.

J. B. B.

A PAIR OF LOVERS.—The parties must for twenty-one days live in the district within which notice of the marriage has been given.

WRATHFUL WILL.—You cannot have the man arrested. If he has got no property it is no use taking any further proceedings against him.

TIMOTHY.—We have no recipe for the process. To colour paperhangings is a process requiring not only knowledge but machinery.

LAURENCE.—As the lady knows his position, and is willing to wait for him, he appears to be a fortunate fellow rather than otherwise.

M. C. W.—We know of no book on the subject you mention. We should say Margy would be the pet name; but people are generally called by a pet name from some peculiarity they possess.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—There were thirteen Emperors of Rome, besides a Pope, who were called Constantine. We do not know to which of these you allude.

T. B.—They would, like their father, be British subjects, except they in turn married and settled down in the country, when it would be held they had renounced their British nationality and accepted the protection of the French laws, with the attendant responsibilities of that choice.

WILD ROSE.—We believe the lady you mention was married quite recently, but do not happen to have full particulars at hand. According to "Burke" of this year the gentleman is still unmarried.

EDIE.—You can get the thing concentrated in the form of essence of lemon from any chemist, in hermetically sealed bottles, which will keep as long as you like.

OLIVER TWIST.—The marriage is quite legal: it is the persons, not the names, that are married; the woman no doubt gave the name she was known by, which was right.

THOMAS A BECKET.—Stewards and ship servants should be and generally are, chosen from the seafaring class. However, if you can cook well, and know something about the duties, you may get a berth.

A RAD.—There will be no difficulty in entering the precincts of the House; but to enter the Chamber known as "the House" you must first obtain an "order" through a member of Parliament.

GARDENER.—Ashes plentifully strewn around currant bushes will keep down the currant worm. Either wood or coal ashes may be used. They must be put on early in summer before the worms emerge and are at work.

PUNCHINELLO.—The climate of South Africa, especially inland, Kimberley, or farther up still, in Johannesburg, Transvaal, is described as being especially suited for weak-chested people; but the expense of the journey to these places is very considerable.

HAMISH.—If you know no more about the business than your queries indicate, don't go into it; it is one in which prices are cut so keen that even those who are expert in the business have difficulty in holding their own.

TODDIE.—Egg and tepid water make an excellent wash for the hair. Rub the yolk of the egg on the scalp and then wash out thoroughly with warm suds, formed of castile soap and water, rinsing with clear warm water.

LITTLE WHITE.—Pour a gallon of water over one pound of unslacked lime, stir it well, and the following day pour off the clear water into a jar. Put the eggs in this as soon as they are laid. In this manner they will continue good for six months or more. They must be new laid.

HISTORICAL.—Fife never had a king; the phrase "kingdom" applied to it is a nickname, but complimentary; the reference being to its compactness and admirable geographical position, which rendered it independent of neighbouring counties; it could produce all it needed for itself.

BRANDA.—If the engagement is to last for two years (which is possibly rather long) the young woman will wear the ring she receives during that period; this is, in fact, almost necessary, in fairness to herself and others, in order that she may not receive and none be induced to offer attentions she could not honourably encourage.

MARIA MATILDA.—Make a lather with perfectly cold water, and a little soap and a little ammonia may be added. Wash the wet clean; then run it backwards and forwards through clean cold water. Press dry without wringing, then hang out. While drying, shake often and draw into shape, and shake again till it is soft and the shape right.

WILSON T.—Christmas Island is one of the most interesting in the world. It is two hundred miles from Java, and consists largely of the coral, which rests on a volcanic foundation. The coral forms almost inaccessible cliffs, covered with luxuriant vegetation. In the day it swarms with huge crabs and at night with rats. Man could not live on the island, as it does not possess fresh water, the rain sinking into the rock.

CLARA.—To make fairy gingerbread take one cupful of butter, two of sugar, one of milk, four of flour, three-fourths of a teaspoonful of soda, one tablespoonful of ginger. Beat the butter to a cream. Add the sugar, gradually, and when very light, the ginger, the milk in which the soda has been dissolved, and finally the flour. Turn baking-pans upside down and wipe the bottoms very clean. Butter them and spread the cake mixture very thin on them. Bake in a moderate oven until brown. When still hot cut into squares with a case-knife and slip from the pan. Keep in a tin box. This is delicious. With the quantities given, a large dish of gingerbread can be made. It must be spread on the bottom of the pan as thin as a wafer, and cut the moment it comes from the oven.

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NITA.—A father cannot compel his daughter, aged seventeen, to leave her place of service.

IGNORANCE.—Venezuela is in Central America; quite away from the region known as South America.

LANCEROT.—It is not necessary to have a license for a gun or revolver that is not taken out of the house.

TEDDY.—Whit Monday in 1894 will be 14th May; Whit Sunday is seven weeks after Easter.

DORA.—Many use pure paraffin oil scented with some perfume, rubbing it well into the roots.

DULCIE.—Fashions vary in hairdressing as much as in any part of a lady's toilette.

DUDLEY DUNCAN.—The only way is to inquire of the present possessor of the hall or castle.

ROLAND R.—No, you cannot marry again while your first wife is alive, unless you get a divorce.

SAM WELLER.—If he summons you for the rent, you had better attend the Court and explain the matter to the judge.

INDIGNANT TOM.—You had better apply to a magistrate for an order on your neighbour to abate the nuisance.

PHILIP R.—The great goldfields of South Africa were discovered in 1869 by an elephant hunter named Hartley.

ANNABEL.—A good lotion for greasy skin is pure rose water, sprinkled into the water in which the face is bathed.

ILL-USED WIFE.—If your husband leaves you without proper means of support you may summon him for desertion.

DELICATE DICK.—You will have to take advantage of advice given at the infirmaries if ordinary advice is not available to you.

P. T. O.—They are not entitled if the servant is dismissed, but if she deserts they may hold the things till she returns to settle.

ADMIRER OF THE "LONDON READER."—Charges of murder can only be heard before judges of the High Court of Justice.

JEANNETTE BEATON.—We have never heard of such result from the practice, but of course it is not wholesome eaten in that way.

POOR SLAVEY.—The law has laid down no rules as to domestic servants' days out. That is a matter of arrangement between master and mistress.

R. S.—"For life" and "for the term of your natural life" means precisely the same thing in sentencing a criminal, that is, twenty years.

T. T.—We really do not know what the local rules on the subject are. You had better inquire of your district excise officer.

BOB ACRES.—An apprentice is not a servant, and cannot be made to do work not connected with the trade his master has undertaken to teach him.

MAME.—The expression would be incorrect if it appeared in a prose description of an event, but it is permitted in poetry.

NORRIS.—You should consult a respectable lawyer, and he will write your landlord pointing out his duty and the consequences of not fulfilling it.

Z. Y. X.—The name "milliner" really means "Milaner," the first hat trimmers in England having been ladies from Milan.

KATHLEEN.—The words "Fabrique Vervieoise," would imply that the article was manufactured at the town of Verviers, in France.

L. R.—The husband is liable, unless he can prove that he gave notice to the tradesman concerned not to give credit to the wife.

REGULAR READER.—A caretaker is (in the absence of agreement to the contrary) a tenant at will, and may be required to leave without notice.

## SHE AND I.

And I said, "She is dead! I could not brook  
 Again on that marvellous face to look."

But they took my hand and they led me in,  
 And left me alone with my nearest kin.

Once again alone in that silent place,  
 My beautiful dead and I, face to face.

And I could not speak, and I could not stir,  
 But I stood and with love, I looked on her.

With love, and with rapture, and strange surprise,  
 I looked on the lips and the close shut eyes;

On the perfect rest and the calm content  
 And the happiness in her features blent.

And the thin white hands that had wrought so much,  
 Now nerveless to kisses or fevered touch.

My beautiful dead who had known the strife,  
 The pain and the sorrow that we call life.

Who had never faltered beneath her cross,  
 Nor murmured when loss followed swift on loss.

And the smile that sweetened her lips away  
 Lay light on her Heaven-closed mouth that day.

I smoothed from her hair a silver thread,  
 And I wept, but I could not think her dead.

I felt with a wonder too deep for speech,  
 She could tell what only the angels teach.

And down over her mouth I leaned my ear,  
 Lest there might be something I should not hear.

Then out from the silence between us stole  
 A message that reached to my inmost soul:

"Why weep you to-day who have wept before,  
 That the road was rough I must journey o'er?"

"Why mourn that my lips can answer you not  
 When anguish and sorrow are both forgot?"

"Behold, all my life I have longed for rest,—  
 Yes, e'en when I held you upon my breast."

"And now that I lie in a breathless sleep,  
 Instead of rejoicing, you sigh and weep."

"My dearest, I know you would not break—  
 If you could—my slumber and have me wake."

"For though life was full of the things that bless,  
 I have never till now known happiness."

Then I dried my tears, and with lifted head  
 I left my mother, my beautiful dead.

J. B. B.

A PAIR OF LOVERS.—The parties must for twenty-one days live in the district within which notice of the marriage has been given.

WRATHFUL WILL.—You cannot have the man arrested. If he has got no property it is no use taking any further proceedings against him.

TIMOTHY.—We have no recipe for the process. To colour paperhangings is a process requiring not only knowledge but machinery.

LAURENCE.—As the lady knows his position, and is willing to wait for him, he appears to be a fortunate fellow rather than otherwise.

M. C. W.—We know of no book on the subject you mention. We should say Margy would be the pet name; but people are generally called by a pet name from some peculiarity they possess.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—There were thirteen Emperors of Rome, besides a Pope, who were called Constantine. We do not know to which of these you allude.

T. B.—They would, like their father, be British subjects, except they in turn married and settled down in the country, when it would be held they had renounced their British nationality and accepted the protection of the French laws, with the attendant responsibilities of that choice.

WILD ROSE.—We believe the lady you mention was married quite recently, but do not happen to have full particulars at hand. According to "Burke" of this year the gentleman is still unmarried.

EDIE.—You can get the thing concentrated in the form of essence of lemon from any chemist, in hermetically sealed bottles, which will keep as long as you like.

OLIVER TWIST.—The marriage is quite legal; it is the persons, not the names, that are married; the woman no doubt gave the name she was known by, which was right.

THOMAS A. BECKET.—Stewards and ship servants should be and generally are, chosen from the seafaring class. However, if you can cook well, and know something about the duties, you may get a berth.

A RAD.—There will be no difficulty in entering the precincts of the House; but to enter the Chamber known as "the House," you must first obtain an "order" through a member of Parliament.

GARDENER.—Ashes plentifully strewn around currant bushes will keep down the currant worm. Either wood or coal ashes may be used. They must be put on early in summer before the worms emerge and are at work.

PUNCHINELLO.—The climate of South Africa, especially inland, Kimberley, or farther up still, in Johannesburg, Transvaal, is described as being specially suited for weak-cheated people; but the expense of the journey to these places is very considerable.

HAMISH.—If you know no more about the business than your queries indicate, don't go into it; it is one in which prices are cut so keen that even those who are expert in the business have difficulty in holding their own.

TODDIE.—Egg and tepid water make an excellent wash for the hair. Rub the yolk of the egg on the scalp and then wash out thoroughly with warm suds, formed of castile soap and water, rinsing with clear warm water.

LITTLE WIFE.—Four a gallon of water over one pound of unslacked lime, stir it well, and the following day pour off the clear water into a jar. Put the eggs in this as soon as they are laid. In this manner they will continue good for six months or more. They must be new laid.

HISTORICAL.—File never had a king; the phrase "kingdom" applied to it is a nickname, but complimentary; the reference being to its compactness and admirable geographical position, which rendered it independent of neighbouring countries; it could produce all it needed for itself.

BRENDA.—If the engagement is to last for two years (which is possibly rather long) the young woman will wear the ring she receives during that period; this is, in fact, almost necessary, in fairness to herself and others, in order that she may not receive and none be induced to offer attentions she could not honourably encourage.

MARIA MATILDA.—Make a lather with perfectly cold water, and a little soap and a little ammonia may be added. Wash the vest clean; then run it backwards and forwards through clean cold water. Press dry without wringing, then hang out. While drying, shake often and draw into shape, and shake again till it is soft and the shape right.

WILSON T.—Christmas Island is one of the most interesting in the world. It is two hundred miles from Java, and consists largely of the coral, which rests on a volcanic foundation. The coral forms almost inaccessible cliffs, covered with luxuriant vegetation. In the day it swarms with huge crabs and at night with rats. Man could not live on the island, as it does not possess fresh water, the rain sinking into the rock.

CLARA.—To make fairy gingerbread take one cupful of butter, two of sugar, one of milk, four of flour, three-fourths of a teaspoonful of soda, one tablespoonful of ginger. Beat the butter to a cream. Add the sugar, gradually, and when very light, the ginger, the milk in which the soda has been dissolved, and finally the flour. Turn baking-pans upside down and wipe the bottoms very clean. Butter them and spread the cake mixture very thin on them. Bake in a moderate oven until brown. When still hot cut into squares with a cake-knife and slip from the pan. Keep in a tin box. This is delicious. With the quantities given, a large dish of gingerbread can be made. It must be spread on the bottom of the pan as thin as a wafer, and cut the moment it comes from the oven.

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of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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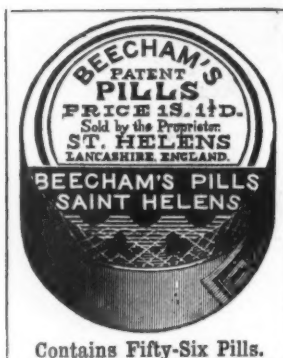
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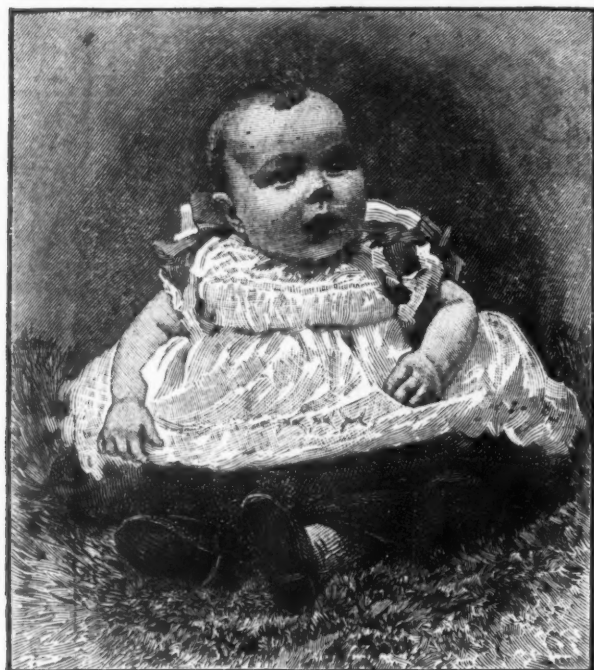
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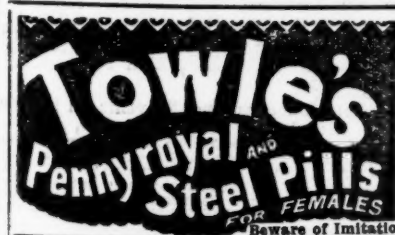
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